THE POOR SOULS IN PURGATORY

KEPPLER

The Poor Souls in Purgatory

The Poor Souls in Purgatory

A HOMILETIC TREATISE

WITH SOME

SPECIMEN SERMONS

BY

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Part I

PREACHING ON THE POOR SOULS

Chapter I

THE PREACHER'S DUTY

In his capacity as preacher the priest must be a man of two worlds, familiar with both; able to act as a guide; ever busy constructing bridges and avenues that will lead from earth to eternity; eager to entice souls to attempt the flight of prayer to the regions beyond; to teach them the science of prayer and how to transfer life's center of gravity from this world to the next. For to be a genuine Christian means to be a citizen of two worlds, to acquire and excerise citizenship in both, and to subordinate the earthly to the eternal.

In the great realm of the world to come there is a well-defined province with which we are connected by manifold interests. It is situated somewhere between Heaven and Hell; between the North Pole of fiercest pain and the South Pole of purest joy. Its atmosphere is woven out of the shadows of death and the lights of Heaven. Its climate is a mixture of burning heat and cooling mountain air. In that province we have a large number

of relatives, friends, and benefactors, who are dependen. on our aid. Yea, all the inhabitants of this domain demand our assistance. Thousands of them send their cries of anguish and calls for help to us continually, and we, as Catholics, must not shut our ears to them. We owe them a mission of mercy and it will be well for us to take this mission very seriously, for this reason among others, that most probably,—perhaps I should rather say: let us hope—in a few years we shall be residents of those same regions, and shall be similarly calling upon the living for pity and aid.

The province I have in mind is Purgatory. It is the evident duty of the preacher to arouse in the hearts of his parishioners lively sentiments of charity, mercy, and compassion towards the souls detained there. His responsibility in this matter is not a trifling one. He is the officially appointed advocate and warden of the Poor Souls, who cannot directly appeal to the faithful on earth in their own behalf. It depends largely on the pastor's zeal how large a measure of love, prayer, and suffrage is offered for the Poor Souls by his parishioners.

Forgetfulness has a blighting power. "Out of sight, out of mind" is but too true an adage. The visible world rivets a man's thoughts and energies to such an extent that, notwithstanding he has a purely spiritual, immortal soul, he is apt to lose sight of the invisible completely for a long time. The faculties of the soul by which we see and hear supernatural things, and by which we are enabled to transport ourselves to the unseen regions beyond the grave, need to be carefully developed and kept in constant activity. Hence it is the

preacher's duty to counteract the propensity to forget the dead, constantly to rekindle belief in the existence of Purgatory, and by graphic descriptions of the sufferings of the Poor Souls, to touch the hearts of the living and present to them both natural and supernatural motives for aiding their deceased relatives.

The pastor will do well to take this duty seriously, even for his own sake. For in a few years he himself will probably be an inmate of that kingdom of suffering. Then he will most assuredly regret it if he has neglected this duty. That same forgetfulness which he failed to combat, will, in a short time, erase *his* name from the tablets of memory, extinguish his relation to his parish, and, having sown sparingly, he will reap sparingly. It is a common saying that the people soon forget their pastors. If this were true, one would have to ask whether the pastors are not themselves to blame. This much is certain: if a pastor has carefully trained his people to familiar intimacy with the Holy Souls and taught them to offer prayer and sacrifice for these souls out of pure affection; if devotion to the Poor Souls forms an essential element of their daily life, he in turn will not be forgotten, but, on the contrary, will reap the fruits of his zeal long after his demise.

Can such a serious and momentous duty be properly complied with by one sermon a year, on All Souls Day? Or, perhaps, by occasionally adding a "Memento Mortuorum" to a discourse or a funeral oration? Hardly. We fear that preaching on the Holy Souls is somewhat neglected; that it has become stereotyped and a matter of routine. The scarcity of literature on this subject

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seems to warrant such a conclusion. It is surprising to note the paucity of texts, of biblical quotations, and of themes commonly met with on this subject, where it would be so easy to draw from overflowing fountains.

It seems that the many new problems presented to the pulpit, the many new demands of the day, current social questions and needs, have relegated the needs of the Holy Souls to the background. Some preachers seem to fear that the time devoted to the Poor Souls is lost for the living. Perhaps we do not realize sufficiently that discourses on the Poor Souls contain many points of ethical and pedagogical value, so that they become a homiletic auxiliary to all the aims of the ordinary sermon. The cleansing fires of Purgatory throw a brighter light on other teachings of our faith, purge the mental vision from the dross of earthly life, open the intellect to supernatural truths, sharpen the conscience, and intensify religious zeal. Thus, the pastor's solicitude for the Holy Souls becomes of itself a solicitude for the living, and will also increase his solicitude for his own poor soul.

Much indeed can be gained for all the other aims of preaching, nay, for pastoral work in general, by establishing true and lasting relations between the faithful on earth and the souls in Purgatory. Our sermons with their supernatural truths and aims will obtain enduring results only in so far as we are able to disengage our auditors from worldly cares and solicitudes, and to free their spiritual view from the fogs of earthly life. This work is a condition of every living faith and of true life in God's grace. The Christian must,

in very deed, be a citizen of two worlds, spiritually well versed and equally at home in both.

The pass that leads into the province of Purgatory is comparatively the easiest. We can still perceive there the footprints of our beloved ones who have gone before. Love impels us to follow them. A certain innate yearning draws the human soul to the realm of the dead. Hence the fascination of Occultism and Spiritism, which claim to be able to establish communication with the departed, and to open avenues leading to their abode. Hence the educational and ethical influence exercised by these erroneous systems.

If the impulse toward the world beyond can exercise some good results even on these erroneous paths, mixed, undoubtedly, with very much that is pernicious, it will certainly produce excellent results when a pious soul makes itself familiar with the direct and certain ways that lead to Purgatory. The journey will be beneficial. A glance into the eternal realms enlarges our views; the atmosphere of eternity sharpens our mental vision, and arouses us from the dull slumber of everyday routine. Like a range of high Alpine mountains the infinite hereafter will tower above our existence here on earth, and arouse in us sublime and serious thoughts. And not only thoughts: The soul can and will develop an activity reaching beyond the confines of this world out into another sphere, perform good deeds there, perform works of noblest charity, and keep up close relations with God's elect and holy Souls. Whilst intercourse among the living is but too often degrading ("as many times as I was amongst men,

I came home less a man," says Thomas à Kempis, intercourse with the Holy Souls invariably tends to refine and ennoble us. A stronger faith, a firmer hope, a more fervent love, a clearer grasp of the problems of life and the means of grace: these are some of the results of regular spiritual visits paid to the realms of Purgatory. A Protestant expresses himself on this point as follows: "The custom of praying for the dead enlivens faith in the immortality of the soul, draws the black veil away from the grave, and opens communications between this world and the next. Had this custom been retained, we should probably have less of skepticism and infidelity amongst us."[1]

The thought of the Poor Souls is truly a *"salubris cogitatio,"* a wholesome thought, and a strong auxiliary in homiletic and pastoral work which ought to be readily used, and which will never become trite. We may again and again remind the faithful of the dead and the Holy Souls in Purgatory without arousing disgust. This reminder is always timely. The unceasing harvest of death and the constant passing of souls from among the ranks of the living to the realms of the dead, principally into Purgatory, gives the pastor of every large parish an opportunity almost every Sunday to speak to some persons with bleeding hearts, and to many others with wounds not yet entirely healed. It would be unpsychological not to take advantage of this fact. The duty of charity and our own homiletic advantage bid us not to neglect the treatment of these wounds, but to apply to them the balsam of this *cogitatio salubris.*

[1] Collier, *Rechtf. der Gründe der Theologie,* II, 101.

Death is an active sacristan and a very useful server. He brings to church persons who have not heard a sermon for years, and he prepares them for us by disposing their minds and opening many a long closed avenue to the heart. He draws deep furrows into which the preacher may freely scatter the seed of God's word.

Mourning for the dead is essentially a noble and an ennobling prerogative. It penetrates to the very depths of the soul, arouses, purifies, and reforms every good inclination, whilst, at the same time, it lessens and subdues evil propensities. In its intensest degree it is, of course, rather passive and benumbing, yet capable of being transformed into energy and spiritual effort. It enables the preacher to cultivate the hearts of his hearers with the plowshare of sorrow, without fear of injury or harm. This is a wound which he may touch; his hand will not be harshly pushed away, and he can achieve much. In many instances a bleeding heart is the only avenue through which religious influences can enter the soul. In any case, it is of the highest importance that such a wounded heart be properly healed. It would not be well to soothe it prematurely with levity or worldly dissipation after the old saying: "Out of sight, out of mind." This might produce a scar apt to harden the entire heart. Nor, on the other hand, would it be well if the wound did not heal at all, but were left to fester interiorly and to reduce the will to a state of chronic disability.

If the wound be left to bleed and heal properly, the resulting scar will be tender and sensitive and offer fertile ground for God's grace and the preacher's care.

It opens communication with the departed through the wireless telegraphy of natural homesickness and Christian faith and introduces a new form of cohabitation which has its own language, its own sympathies, prayers, and testimonies of love, and offers an adequate substitute for the lost companionship severed by death.

This is not a matter of mere fancy, no vague phantasm or sentimental delusion, but an absolutely real relation of mutual giving and receiving. It is, as it were, the long-distance action of a clairvoyant faith and of a love that is stronger than death. It is an exchange of great and noble thoughts and powers between two worlds. Do not think that only sentimental persons or a few elect souls are capable of cultivating this intimate exchange of thoughts with the Poor Souls. Ordinary Catholics are so familiar with it that they look upon the Poor Souls as members of their own household and treat them as every-day companions. The value of such a companionship is not to be underestimated. By means of it children remain under the spiritual care of their deceased parents, a husband under the salutary influence of his pious wife, in short, the living generation continues to be in contact with the departed.

These are weighty reasons, admonishing the pastor to give frequent expression to the *"salutaris cogitatio"* in his sermons. The apprehension that faith in Purgatory might lead to laxity of morals, is groundless, unpsychological, and refuted by experience. Some held that the knowledge of a possible future purification in the other world would tend to diminish the zeal for conversion and improvement in this life, lessen the horror for sin, or lead to a false assurance that transgression of

God's law, because it can be atoned for in the next world, need not be taken seriously. No practical Catholic would be impressed by such reflections, least of all those who cultivate intimate relations with the Poor Souls. On the contrary! By meditating on Purgatory the soul will conceive a sincere earnestness and fervor, and will become convinced that it is far easier to do penance here below than to await the purgatorial cleansing. It will learn that venial sin is not a trifle, since it can be wiped out only in excruciating flames. Intimate intercourse with the Poor Souls makes us appreciate the value of our own soul, enables us to prize highly the value of time on earth, urges us to frequent reception of the Sacraments, and teaches us to exercise resignation and patience in trials and sufferings. In our own times it is a doubly efficient school of piety and mercy, magnanimous generosity, and noble charity, the fruits of which will benefit not only the departed souls, but also the destitute and poor on earth. "Any one who has observed the ways of the human heart and the impulses of the Christian people," says Oswald, "will admit that perhaps one-third of all good deeds are performed by the faithful with reference to Purgatory, and without this incentive would be omitted."[2]

Such powerful and valuable forces and ethical motives are embodied in the truly Catholic relation of the living with the Poor Souls. We ought to make use of these forces and motives not only for the sake of the Poor Souls, but also to promote the salvation of the living, by preaching appropriate sermons on the Poor

[2] *Eschatologie*, p. 122

Souls. This is, however, not an easy task, and hence it will be worth while to treat preaching on the Holy Souls as a homiletic problem by itself. As a help for pastors burdened with cares and having little time for deeper study, it seemed advisable to present briefly dogmatic, biblical, apologetical, and paraenetic material for just this kind of sermons, and also to give methodical directions, texts, sketches, examples, and quotations for ready reference and application.

Chapter II

THE DOGMA

The doctrine of Purgatory offers no particular difficulty to homiletic treatment. However, the pastor should not fail to consult his dogmatic theology to get a clear idea as to what is actually taught on this head by the Church, what natural and necessary deductions flow from her teaching, and what is left to speculation and free discussion. In our critical time this distinction must be rigidly observed also in sermons.

What is the final fate of those who, through the gateway of death, enter the great Beyond? If they die free from guilt and sin, and have paid the penalties due to their sins here below, nothing will prevent them from entering at once into Heaven. The Judge's gracious, loving glance and His "well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matth. XXV, 21) will instantly transform their state of grace into the state of eternal glory. Those, however, who depart this world in the state of mortal sin, without repentance and conversion, are inevitably doomed to hell. But what is the fate of those—and they are many—who, although they depart in the state of grace, have not yet fully satisfied for their temporal punishment due to former sins, or who are still burdened with venial sins, blemishes and imperfections of various kinds. To admit them immediately to Heaven would be contrary to God's sanctity and justice; for no sinner may dwell in Heaven, and the debt of sin can-

not be liquidated there. To consign them to hell would also contravene divine justice and mercy. For such there is an intermediate state between Heaven and hell, where they undergo a purifying process, from which they eventually reach eternal beatitude. This intermediate state is in a way a merciful continuation of their earthly carrier, not indeed a state of probation, of moral work and progress, and of meritorious deeds, which are impossible after death, but simply a state of penitential suffering, endurance, and patient expectation.

According to the common and well-founded opinion of theologians, not only those souls go to Purgatory, who have to pay the temporal punishments due to sins already forgiven, but those also who are still infected with venial sins. The further question, when and how they are released from the *guilt* of venial sin, is difficult to answer and the theologians disagree on it.[1]

If it becomes advisable to discuss this question in the pulpit, the preacher may follow the opinion of St. Catharine of Genoa, shared by Scheeben-Atzberger and Pohle-Preuss, that immediately after death, or at the first glance of the Divine Judge, those souls elicit an act of contrition so perfect, intense, and fervent that all the guilt adhering to the soul is instantly blotted out; or he may follow the teaching of St. Thomas, espoused by Heinrich-Gutberlet, that not only the temporal punishment, but also the guilt of venial sin is gradually canceled by means of entire submission and joyous patience

[1] See Scheeben-Atzberger, *Dogmatik*, Vol. IV, P. II, pp. 855 sq.; Heinrich-Gutberlet, *Dogmatik*, Vol. X, 634 sqq.; Pohle-Preuss, *Eschatology*, pp. 88 sqq., 3rd ed., St. Louis, 1920.

in enduring purgatorial punishment, which God accepts as adequate satisfaction.

If the pastor clearly explains the Church's teaching on Purgatory, in connection with her doctrine on justification, he need not fear contradiction or opposition. But he cannot, of course, content himself with a few dogmatic phrases. He must explain the meaning and bearings of this doctrine in a concrete way. He must illumine this mysterious realm with the lamp of faith. It is no mere idle curiosity that demands to know the condition of the Holy Souls in Purgatory and their relations to us and ours to them. A wide domain for speculative and contemplative research, and for homiletic exploitation is here presented, which, however, the preacher should not enter without a wise warning.

The Council of Trent enjoins the Bishops to see to it that the "reasonable doctrine of Purgatory," as handed down by the holy Fathers and synods, be preached and taught everywhere; adding, however, that "before unlettered audiences the more difficult and subtle questions which are not conducive to edification, and from which piety derives no increment, should be excluded from popular sermons; and those which are uncertain, or labor under the suspicion of falsity, should not be permitted to be broached or discussed. Questions which tend to mere curiosity, or superstition, or filthy lucre, should be prohibited as scandalous and injurious to the faithful." [2]

Is there a real, sensitive, material fire in purgatory, or may we take the word "fire" in a figurative sense?

[2] Sess. XXV, *Decr. de Purg.*

Bautz, Hense, and Atzberger regard the thesis that there is a real fire, as most probable, nay, even theologically certain, because it is supported by many of the Holy Fathers and by the older and newer Scholastics. Oswald, starting from the same basis, hesitates to call it a dogmatic necessity, or even "*fidei proxima.*" The figurative interpretation of the "*ignis purgatorius*" is also based on tradition, and is ably defended by Möhler, Dieringer, Klee, and Bishop Schneider. The Church has never decided this question, not even at the Council of Florence where it was discussed with the Greeks; and hence the preacher is allowed to use his own judgment. But he must under all circumstances emphasize that there is no dogmatic obligation to accept either opinion and abstain from proscribing or ridiculing the one which he rejects. We shall meet this question again when we come to treat of the "*poena damni.*"

Researches and discussions as to whether the fire of Purgatory is exactly the same as that of hell, or at least similar to it; whether Purgatory and hell are locally adjacent; whether both are to be sought in the interior of the earth; whether the Poor Souls witness the torments of the damned; whether, besides the pains of fire, frost, wild animals, or devils harass the Poor Souls in Purgatory; these as well as the more or less grotesque and fantastic descriptions and assertions of curious mystics—male and female—are undoubtedly all excluded from the pulpit by the Tridentine decree. Concerning such questions we may say with Cardinal Bellarmine: "*Maneant haec inter secreta.*"

Purgatory itself, as an instrument of divine justice and mercy for the purpose of punishment and purification of sinners, will cease to exist on the day of judgement. To calculate the duration of Purgatory for individual souls is impossible. The preacher will not espouse the opinion of Dominicus Soto and Maldonatus that no one will be in Purgatory for more than ten years; nor will he affirm with St. Bede that all souls are sentenced to Purgatory until the last day, and only the intercession of the living can effect a shortening of their pnishment: for both of these opinions are equally unfounded. But he will emphasize for the benefit of the Poor Souls that, judging from the opinion of many theologians and the practice of the Church in accepting perpetual Mass foundations, it is possible that some souls remain in Purgatory for a long time.

Chapter III

PROOF FROM SACRED SCRIPTURE

Scriptural proof for the dogma of Purgatory cannot be dispensed with in view of the fact that this dogma is rejected as unbiblical, nay antibiblical, by Protestants.

The argument should be correct and solid. The force of the biblical passages quoted should not be exaggerated or stretched unduly. The texts must be selected carefully, presented clearly and examined calmly. We must not pretend to be able to prove the doctrine of Purgatory conclusively from Holy Scripture. The opposition of the Reformers to this doctrine was greatly facilitated by the want of direct and conclusive biblical proofs. We shall have to say with Scheeben,[1] that this doctrine is not expressly and positively inculcated in Holy Scripture, but is either presupposed or more or less clearly alluded to in several passages.

1. 2 Mach. XII, 43-46 is the classical passage in the Old Testament, dogmatically as well as historically cogent. It contains an express approbation of the belief in an intermediate state in the other world and of the pious custom of assisting the souls detained there by sacrifices and prayers. Protestants deny the canonicity of 2 Mach. and, consequently, the dogmatical value of the quotation; but they have to admit that we have here an authentic and a credible historical document which

[1] *Dogmatik*, IV, ii, 844.

proves that, already in the Old Testament, before Jesus Christ, belief in an intermediate state of those piously departed but still infected with venial sin was common and prayer and sacrifice for them a well known custom. It follows that the Saviour did not need to reveal this truth because it was known to the Jews and prayers for the dead formed a part of the official Sabbath service at the time of Jesus and His Apostles.

2. In the New Testament, the word of Jesus that a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost can never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the next (Matth. XII, 32; Mark III, 29; Luk. XII, 10), would be unintelligible if no forgiveness of sin were possible in the other world. Christ's statement admits of such a forgiveness, and consequently, of the possibility of Purgatory; beyond that, this text proves nothing.

3. The warning of our Lord to be reconciled to one's adversary when still on the way, lest one should be taken before the judge and cast into prison (Matth. V, 25 sqq.; Luke XII, 58 sq.), and the words "Thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing," have been applied to Purgatory. This is permissible, though some interpreters take "prison" to mean "gehenna," from which there is no redemption because payment of the debt there is inconceivable.

4. 1 Cor. II, 11-15 is the classic Purgatorial text of the New Testament. Although, according to Schanz, it offers considerable difficulties, this text may, with great probability, be interpreted as referring to Purgatory.

[1] Bickell, *Messe und Pascha*, 103, 137 sq.

Exegetically it is certain that this passage speaks only of Christian teachers and their fate on the day which is revealed in fire, that is, the day of the last judgment. On that day they and their work will be put to the test of fire. There are two classes. Both have builded, that is, preached the word of God, and both have builded on the true foundation, which is Christ; but with different material:—one used gold, silver, and precious stones; the other, poor and unsuitable material. The work of both is tested by fire; the one proves to be of sterling worth and merits eternal reward; whereas the other is burned, and of its "builder" it is said that, although he suffers loss, he himself will be saved, but "so as by fire." Since he has not grievously sinned, he will not be consigned to the fire of hell, but to another fire, which torments, but also purifies and leads to salvation.

It is to be admitted that the phrase "cleansing fire" refers to the universal conflagration at the end of the world which, at the same time, will be a Purgatory for the just of those last days. However, this passage may be referred to the doctrine of Purgatory for the following reasons: The underlying thought of the whole passage is that every fault, even the slightest, committed by the teacher, and every moral failing must be atoned for, either here below or hereafter. This principle is applicable quite generally, not only to teachers and their work, but to all Christians and to all good work done in Jesus Christ. Now, since the possibility of purification and atonement is conceded even for those living on the day of judgment, it cannot logically be denied to those who died before that day, and whose

lifework did not entirely stand the test of the particular judgment. They, too, can be saved, though only "as by fire." The words "as by fire," let us add, may not be used as an argument either in favor of or against the acceptance of a real fire in Purgatory.

5. In Phil. II, 10 (*"ut in nomine Jesu omne genu flectatur coelestium, terrestrium et infernorum"*), it has been asserted that *"inferni"* can only mean the Poor Souls because the devils and the reprobates in hell do not bend their knees to Jesus or acknowledge His Divinity. But the point emphasized is rather that—whether willingly or not—the whole world of spirits and men, even the evil spirits of hell must submit to Jesus Christ and render Him homage. In this number, of course, the Holy Souls are included.

Apoc. V, 13 speaks of believing and willing adorers only: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth . . . I heard all saying: to Him who sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb, benediction and honor and glory and power forever and ever." The creatures "under the earth" must be sought in Purgatory.

6. It may be accepted as certain that St. Paul, in 2 Tim. I, 16-18, speaks of Onesiphorus as of one departed. To the family he wishes God's blessing, but to him a merciful judgment, as a reward for the many acts of charity done by him. This wish is a prayer, and the entire passage furnishes an important instance of Apostolic intercession for a departed soul.

Another text of St. Paul referring to a custom in Corinth, namely, baptizing the dead (1 Cor. XV, 29),

is too obscure and questionable as to its meaning; hence it had better not be used in the pulpit.

7. There are finally to be considered those passages which form the biblical basis of the dogma of the Descent of Christ into hell, and which, like this dogma, stand in a certain relation to Purgatory; *viz.*: Acts II, 24; 1 Pet. III, 18-20; IV, 6; Eph. IV, 8 sqq.; 1 Cor. XV, 54. After His death on the Cross, the soul of the Saviour, indissolubly united with His Divinity, descended into the realm of the dead and remained there until the Resurrection. He entered that realm as the Lord of life and death, who has the keys of "*sheol*" (Apoc. I, 18), as the victor over death (Os. XIII, 14; 1 Cor. XV, 54), and, according to St. Peter, as the preacher of glad tidings. This joyful message was carried first of all to the just in the "*limbus patrum.*" To them Christ reveals Himself as the Messias, and announces their redemption. To them and to all the departed souls that are free from guilt and sin, He immediately grants freedom, the bliss of the beatific vision, makes them, who were prisoners of death, His own captives and takes them, at His Ascension, triumphantly with Him into Heaven (Ps. LXVII, 19).

It is generally supposed that our Saviour did not appear personally in hell, and did not preach to the damned, although His presence in the nether world undoubtedly affected hell and made its inmates tremble. Whether Jesus, at His Descent into the infernal regions, also visited the Souls in Purgatory is a question which the Church has not decided, nor does Holy Scripture directly refer to it. All we can say is that if, according to

the classical passage (1 Petr. III, 20), Christ's sermon in limbo was addressed to those "who had been incredulous at one time, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noë," and hence to such as, at the time of the deluge, were not saved in the ark, but perished as sinners, though pentitent, their souls were probably to be found in Purgatory rather than in the *"limbus patrum."*

Some of the Fathers expressly mention Purgatory as a station on the way of Christ's descent.[1] Thus St. Augustine (*Ep.* 99 *ad Evod.*) says that the Lord came to the nether world and freed from the sufferings of that place those whom He wished. And again (*De Gen. ad Lit.*, 12, c. 33): "Christ came to the place where sinners were tormented, in order to liberate from their pains those of whom He knew in virtue of His divine justice that they were worthy." Cyril of Alexandria (*In Ioann.*, 12) asserts that Christ brought forgiveness to those who were sitting in the darkness of the eternal abyss. St. Ambrose (*De Incarn.*, 5) says: "Although His body lay in the grave, He Himself, being free among the dead, granted to those in the lower regions forgiveness, after having canceled the law of death." If the same writer on another occasion (*De Myst. Pasch.*, 4) remarks that Jesus descended into the depths of "*tartarus*" to snatch the souls from the jaws of the infernal dragon, and Caesarius (*Hom. de Pasch.*, 3) poetically describes how at Christ's descent the eternal night of

[1] See Teipel, "Ueber die Himmelfahrt Christi," *Theol. Quartalschrift*, Tübingen, 1860, pp. 577 sqq.; K. Schwind (*Die Niederfahrt Christi in die Unterwelt*, 1911) arrives at somewhat different exegetical conclusions.

Hades was brightly illumined by His glory, how the gnashing of teeth ceased, the burdens and chains were loosed, and the fetters of the damned were broken, these strong expressions can be referred neither to the *limbus patrum* nor to the damned in hell—for the latter's redemption is impossible—but must be referred to Purgatory.

St. Thomas speaks of Christ's appearance in Purgatory as of a self-evident truth and mentions these among the reasons for the descent: "*secunda ratio fuit, ut perfecte subveniret suis amicis omnibus; habebat enim amicos suos non solum in mundo, sed etiam in inferno. .... Quarta, ut liberaret sanctos, qui erant in inferno* (*Expos. Symb. Apostol.*); *illis vero, qui erant in purgatorio, spem consequendae gloriae dedit.*" (*S. Th.*, 3, q. 52, art. 3). He also speaks of the immediate liberation by the Saviour of those who were already sufficiently purified or had merited this grace by being loyal to Christ during their lifetime.

No intrinsic reasons against Christ's visit in Purgatory can be imagined. At the most, such might be advanced against an immediate pardon and liberation of all the souls without distinction. In favor of such a visit, on the other hand, the following consideration might be urged: Would it not be akin to cruelty, on such an occasion, to put the Holy Souls on the same footing with the damned and to deprive them of the vision of the Saviour? Would this be compatible with the gracious and merciful intentions of Jesus in His descent? Could it be that the loving Jesus should, without sympathy, pass by souls that are His own and will be with Him

eternally, but are now in great distress and pain; souls that have their share in the great sacrifice of atonement He has just offered, although only through the intercession of the living!

In this question we have also the support of the Church, who has received the descent into the *Officium Defunctorum*, and in the ninth responsory of Matins says: "*Libera me, Domine, de viis inferni, qui portas aereas confregisti et visitasti infernum et dedisti eis lumen, ut viderent Te, qui erant in poenis tenebrarum, clamantes et dicentes: Advenisti, Redemptor noster.*"

Consequently we are fully justified in including in the descent of Christ a visit of the Saviour to the Poor Souls. This is very important and practical for our sermons on Purgatory; for now we may, nay, ought to point out, how the Saviour is our model and guide, how He Himself has shown us the way to Purgatory, and, by His own example, taught us to have pity on the Poor Souls, so that here, too, as in all other things, we have merely to follow in His footsteps.

[1] See the Good Friday Sermon, *infra*. Bourdaloue, in his sermon on All Souls Day, also refers to the *descensus*, following Peter of Blois.

Chapter IV

PROOF FROM TRADITION

"In connection with the well nigh unanimous and overwhelming tradition in doctrine and cult, the dogma of Purgatory gains full and entire certainty." (Schanz). All the evidence required to prove this statement is aptly and shortly presented by Redner, Schneider, Wiseman, and especially by Heinrich-Gutberlet. We deem it useful for practical purposes to give here the most important and, at the same time, most impressive and homiletically most useful testimonies.

1. In the *Acta Pauli et Theclae,* commonly placed about 160 A. D., it is reported that Falconilla, the deceased daughter of Queen Tryphaena, appeared to her mother, saying: "Mother, you must adopt in my place the abandoned Thecla, that she may pray for me, and I may be translated into the realms of the just." Thecla, requested by the mother, prays: "O God, Thou Son of the Most High, do to her according to her wish, so that her daughter Falconilla may live forever."

2. In the *Passio Perpetuae,* well known to Tertullian and to Christian antiquity, written about the early part of the third century, we read the following beautiful story: "One day when Perpetua was praying with her companions in prison, her brother Dinocrates, who had died of cancer at the age of seven, was suddenly recalled to her mind. She grew confident that her prayers would be granted if she would pray for him.

So she began to pray and sigh to the Lord for him. The following night she saw her brother coming out of a dark place, where many were together, hot and parched with thirst, disfigured and pale, still bearing in his face the wound he had in death. For him she had prayed, but between him and her there was a great distance, so that they were unable to meet. On the place where Dinocrates stood, there was a pond full of water, but its bank was higher than the figure of the boy. Dinocrates stretched himself, as if he wanted to drink. It grieved Perpetua that the pond had water indeed, but that the boy could not drink on account of the height of the bank. She awoke and understood that her brother suffered; but she also trusted that her prayer would bring him relief in his sufferings, and she pleaded with God for him day and night. Her prayers were granted, as she saw forthwith in another vision. Again she saw the same place, which had been dark before; it was now brightly illumined, and Dinocrates was clean of body, well clothed, and refreshed by a cooling breeze. Where the wound had been, there was now a scar. The bank of the pond was lowered to half the height of his body, and there was a vessel from which Dinocrates drank; and, being fully satisfied, he went away joyfully to play as children do. Perpetua awoke and knew that he was freed from his penance." It is not necessary to see in this vision a divine revelation, but at any rate it is a weighty historical testimony proving that the belief in Purgatory and in the power of in-

tercession for the Holy Souls was well known and practised at that early date.

3. Touching manifestions of this belief are found on the walls and tombs of the Catacombs. The souls of the departed are recommended to the holy Martyrs, near whom their bodies are buried. The object of the prayers is: peace and refreshment (*"refrigerium"* occurs innumerable times); the feeding of them by the "Ichthys," the light of the dead. The departed themselves are represented as requesting the intercession of the living faithful. On one of the tombstones of the Catacombs, now in the Lateran Museum, a husband declares that he set this inscription for his beloved wife Lucifera "in order that all brethren who read it may pray for her, that she may reach God."

"The whole series of invocations and acclamations preserved to us in those ancient Christian inscriptions," says Kirsch, "undoubtedly bears the character of real prayers by which the living intended to help their departed brethren in the other world. The very requests for peace and refreshment, for admission amongst the Saints, etc., contained in the inscriptions of the second and third centuries, presuppose the conviction that the good desired for the departed souls will be granted to them by God in response to the prayers of the faithful. The petitions for the departed addressed directly to God, as found in the inscriptions of the second and third centuries, can be understood only on this supposition."[1]

[1] Kirsch, *Die Akklamationen und Gebete der altchristlichen Grabinschriften*, 1897, pp. 46 sq.

Wilpert has proved that many pictures in the Catacombs refer to Purgatory. "The faithful prayed for the dead, entreating God to protect their souls, as He protected Daniel in the lion's den, the three young men in the furnace, Noë in the ark, and Susanna against the two elders. With the same intention, and in order to invite the visitors of these subterranean cemeteries to pray for the dead, these biblical figures were depicted near the sepulchres—Daniel and Noë in the hypogeum of the Flavii as early as the first century, and all four together at the beginning of the second century in the Capella Greca."[2]

4. In the oldest liturgical prayers (the "Sacramentaries") and in the earliest "Liturgies" (including that of the *Testamentum Domini N. I. Ch.*, and the Apostolic Constitutions), the dead are remembered, not only to honor their memory and to comfort the mourning survivors, but in order to obtain for them forgiveness of their sins, remission of punishments, and their liberation from Purgatory. This fact is admitted even by Protestants.

5. Tertullian may be mentioned here, not so much as a reliable interpreter of ecclesiastical teaching, but rather as a witness to the practice of the faithful. Prayer for the dead, and the making of oblations—gifts for the Eucharist from which the elements for consecration were taken on the anniversary of their demise—were, according to him, a generally recognized custom of the Church (*De Anim.*, c. 51; *De Monog.*, c. 10; *De Exhort. Castit.*, c. 11; *De Corona Milit.*, c. 3).

[2] Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*, p. 334.

6. St. Cyprian, decapitated in 258, renewed a decree of his predecessors according to which "no oblation should be made and no sacrifice offered for the repose of him" who, contrary to the ecclesiastical law, had "nominated a churchman for his executor." In his Epistles (55, 20) St. Cyprian speaks of Purgatory thus: "It is one thing to hope for forgiveness, and another to enter into eternal glory; one thing to be cast into prison and not to go out from thence until the last farthing is paid, and another immediately to receive the reward of faith and virtue; one thing to be tortured for sins by long-lasting pains and purged by fire, and another to have already expiated sin [here below] by martyrdom (*passione*)."

7. St. Ephrem Syrus (died about 373) emphasizes the usefulness of prayers for the dead: "Instead of shedding useless tears over the grave, let them flow at prayers in church, for in these there is help and comfort for the dead as well as for the living." (*Carm. Nisib.*, 62, 31). In his socalled "Testament" he forbids, under threats, all pomp at his funeral and orders: "Give me prayers, psalms, and sacrifices as my viaticum, and when the thirtieth day arrives, Brethren, celebrate for me a memento; for the departed obtain help by means of the sacrifices offered by the living." If the Jewish priests were able by their sacrifices to help those fallen in battle, " how much more will the priests of the Son of God by their holy sacrifices and prayers efface the sins of the departed!"

8. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (died 386) says: "We pray for the deceased Fathers and Bishops, in short, for all

who have departed this life in our communion, believing that the souls of those for whom prayers are offered, receive very great relief while this holy and tremendous Victim lies on the altar .... For those that have fallen asleep in the Lord we pray and offer Christ, Who is sacrificed for our sins, and Who reconciled the merciful God for them and for us." (*Cat. Myst.*, 5, n. 9).

9. Of the many sayings of St. Chrysostom (died 407) the following deserve special mention. He traces liturgical prayer for the dead back to the Apostles, nay, to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost (*Hom.* 41 *in Cor.*) and says: "The Apostles knew full well that it works much good for the departed: for whenever all the people stand with hands raised in prayer, together with the whole assembly of the priests, and the tremendous Victim lies on the altar, should we not by our petitions in their behalf move the heart of God?" (*Hom.* 3 *in Ep. ad Phil.*, n. 4); and again: "You say, I mourn for this loved departed one .... You ought to hasten to his aid, not by tears, but by prayers, alms, and offerings. For not without reason has this been introduced, not in vain do we remember the dead at the sacred mysteries, approach the altar for them, and implore the Lamb Which is present, and Which takes away the sins of the world, but in order that the dead may receive some alleviation ..... Therefore we pray with confidence for the whole world, and remember the dead together with the martyrs and the confessors and priests. For we all constitute but one body, although one member is superior to another, and so it is possible that by prayer and sacrifice we may obtain full forgiveness for those

whose names we mention." (*Hom.* 41 *in Ep.* 1 *Cor.*, n. 4-5). In the last sentence mention is made of the invocation of the saints and martyrs in favor of the Poor Souls, as indeed on the earliest epigraphical and sculptural documents of the Catacombs, the saints appear as the protectors of the Poor Souls, who are recommended to their intercession.

10. From St. Ambrose (died 397) we have a beautiful prayer in the funeral sermon for the Emperor Theodosius: "Grant, O Lord, to Thy servant Theodosius that rest which Thou hast prepared for thy saints. May his soul soar up to whence it came, where it can no more feel the sting of death, and where it will learn that death is not the end of life, but of sin. I loved him, and therefore I will follow him into the land of the living; I will not leave him, until by my prayers and lamentations he will be admitted unto the holy mount of the Lord." (*De Obitu Theod.*, n. 36). Beautiful is the consolation he gives to Faustin upon the death of his sister (*Ep.* 3 *ad Faustin., de Obitu Sororis*): "*Non tam deplorandam quam prosequendam orationibus reor, nec moestificandam lacrimis tuis, sed orationibus animam eius Deo commendandam.*" In his *De Fide Resurr.* (1, 2), written on the occasion of the death of his brother Satyrus, Ambrose exhorts his parents to distribute the inheritance of their children among the poor as offerings for their souls.

11. St. Jerome (died 420) in a letter to Pammachius (*Ep.* 66) says: " Other husbands decorate the graves of their wives with violets, roses, lilies, and purple-colored flowers. By such tokens of love they relieve the grief

of their hearts. Our Pammachius bedews the sacred ashes and the venerable remains with the balsam of alms; for he knows what is written: As fire is extinguished by water, so is sin effaced by almsdeeds."

12. St. Augustine (died 430) in his writings speaks repeatedly of the doctrine of Purgatory and intercession for the dead. Forty passages in his books treat of this matter. Dogmatically the most precise statement is found in the *Enchiridion* (c. 109; *al.* c. 30), which reads as follows: "During the time which intervenes between the death of man and his resurrection, the soul finds itself in certain hidden places, according to each soul's merits during its life in the flesh, either enjoying rest or suffering tribulations. Neither can it be denied that the souls of the dead are granted refreshment and relief through the piety of their beloved ones on earth, whenever the sacrifice of the Mediator is offered, or alms are distributed for them. But it will benefit only those who have lived so that it *can* benefit them afterwards. For there is a certain manner of living which is neither so good, that after death such would no longer be needed, nor so bad, that it could no longer be of any use. When the sacrifice of the altar or alms are offered for all the departed that had been baptized, they are thank-offerings for the very good, atonements for those not very bad; for the very bad, even though they do not help the dead, they afford consolation to the living."

Famous and admired even by Protestants is Augustine's touching profession of faith contained in the last request of his dying mother, and in his prayer for her (*Conf.* l. 9, c. 11 to 13), especially this beautiful pas-

sage (c. 13): "When the day drew nigh on which she was to be dissolved, she was not concerned about a pompous funeral, nor that her body should be deposited with spices; she did not desire a grand monument, nor wish for a grave in her native land. None of all these things did she charge us with: one thing alone did she request and desire: that she be remembered at the altar, upon which, as she knew, the holy sacrifice was offered, which blots out the handwriting of the decree that stood against us (Col. II, 14) . . . To the sacrament of Redemption Thy servant hath joined her soul by the bond of faith; no one shall tear it and deprive her of Thy protection."

Frequently quoted is also the passage *In Ps.*, 37, n. 3: "*Gravior est ille ignis, quam quidquid potest homo pati in hac vita.*" Augustine's treatise *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda* (*Ad Paulin.*, c. 1 to 18) is an answer to the question addressed to him, whether it was of any use to have the remains of the dead deposited near a sepulchre or in the cemetery of a saint or a martyr. He agrees with Paulinus that it would profit the soul of the departed to choose for his grave a place where he could, at the same time, be recommended to the intercession of a saint or martyr, and would thus be placed under their protection. But even where such a burial was not possible, the suffrages for the departed should under no condition be neglected, as they were customary in the Church at the general memento for those departed in the Catholic communion, so that even those for whom neither parents, nor children, nor relatives, nor friends did this service, would receive some

benefit from the one common mother (c. 4). "In the books of the Macchabees we read that sacrifices were offered for the dead. But even if this were not recorded in the old books, the authority of the entire Church is of no little value, in as much as the memento for the dead has its definite place in the prayers of the priest offered to God on His altar." (c. 1).

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Chapter V

ARGUMENT FROM REASON

A clear, concise, and definite exposition of the dogma of Purgatory will, as a rule, make a lengthy argument and apology unnecessary. Reason, supposing it can free itself from prejudice, and natural feeling readily concur. This doctrine is, as Bougaud correctly says, "rooted in the depths of conscience."

One simple question alone is decisive, namely: How will those fare who depart from this world as believing, good, and honest Christians, but still infected with undeniable faults and defects? and those who were converted from their sinful ways only in their last illness, perhaps on their deathbed, but then turned to God with all sincerity, though they had not fully performed their life's task or perfected themselves ethically? Experience shows that the number of those who enter eternity thus is very great, undoubtedly greater than the number of those who depart in a state of perfect justice. What shall be their sentence? Should they be allowed to enter Heaven with their sin and guilt, with all their imperfections, faults and weaknesses? Or should they, like the reprobates and spiritually dead, be condemned to hell?

Both ideas are equally intolerable; God's holiness forbids the former, His justice the latter. Even the Protestant Hase admits: "Most people are probably too good for hell, and assuredly too bad for Heaven; we must

frankly admit that there is an inconsistency here in the teaching of the Protestant Reformers."[1] This simple reasoning leads directly to Purgatory. Nor is it difficult to show how the belief in Purgatory develops organically from the Catholic doctrine of justification; and is in particular harmony with the dogmas that there is an essential difference between mortal and venial sin, that not all the temporal punishments are remitted together with the sin itself and its eternal punishment, and that every sin, even though it be but venial, must be atoned for and expiated; and how appropriate this faith is alike to God's holiness, justice, and mercy.

In our days of the transvaluation or devaluation of all, even the highest and eternal values, when the idea of God has become vague and morality is faded, when people accept with reluctance faith in an infinitely just and holy God Who demands expiation and satisfaction for every guilt, we must not be surprised to hear the same objection which was advanced by the early Protestants against Purgatory,—namely, that it is a cruel invention. Certain gross fancies concerning Purgatory and the condition of the Poor Souls, of which we ourselves are not altogether innocent, are partly responsible for this opinion, and have created the impression that such a treatment of His children is not becoming to God. They would find it more proper and becoming if God would graciously condone all faults and punishments.

Here we must emphasize with St. Bonaventure the truth that, "because the Divine Majesty has been offen-

[1] *Handbuch der prot. Polemik*, 1878, p. 400.

ded, the Church injured, and the soul defiled by sin, the offense demands a condign punishment, the injury due satisfaction, the defilement proper purification" (*Breviloq.*, 7, 2). This effeminate generation must be taught that a mere condonation of venial sins and temporal punishments would not be in keeping with the infinite justice of God and the eternal order of morality, and that precisely by opening a possibility of atoning and making satisfaction in the other world—by a quasi-artificial extension of the "*status viatoris*"—God reveals His justice and mercy in a wonderful way. His mercy, in particular, is beautifully evidenced by granting to those souls—themselves sentenced to inactivity —a vicarious penance and applying to them the merits of the living.

There is another consideration which may serve to dissipate the least appearance of cruelty or lack of mercy on the part of God. The penalty of Purgatory is not inflicted upon the soul against its will, it is not forced upon it, but the soul itself ardently desires and demands it. Thus St. Thomas says: "*Dicitur aliquid voluntarium voluntate conditionata ,.... si sine poena ad bonum pervenire non possumus. Et tunc voluntas poenam supportat, et quantum ad hoc voluntaria dicitur. Et sic poena purgatorii est voluntaria.*" (*Suppl., App.*, qu. 2, art. 1). St. Catherine of Genoa beautifully writes: "The soul, not finding itself in perfect purity after its separation from the body, and seeing that this obstacle can be removed only by the flames of Purgatory, impetuously and joyfully rushes in." To stand in the glorious light of Heaven and under the flaming eyes of

God with all these faults and sins now so clearly seen and understood, would be utterly intolerable to the soul, and so it has only one desire—to withdraw from this light, to escape from this glance, which it cannot endure, to hide and be cleansed in Purgatory.

The belief in Purgatory has been called universal, and not without good reason. The Protestant Thiersch writes: "I do not say too much when I maintain that there can almost be established a *consensus gentium* in favor of the belief in a state of purification, distinct from the state of the damned, for departed souls. Not only is the tendency to hold this belief deeply rooted in human nature, but the belief itself ever renews itself by the mysterious sounds which at all times reach the land of the living from the dark domain beyond."

Amongst the ancient nations there is hardly one that has not some kind of belief in, and corresponding communication with, the souls in the world beyond. In this connection we may mention the belief in a migration of souls among the Egyptians, who frequently inscribed on their tombs a request to the living not to refuse their prayers to the dead. The Persians were accustomed to recite certain prayers for their dead, and in the Avesta offerings are demanded from the relatives for blotting out the sins of the departed. The ancient Chinese and Japanese, the Assyrians and Babylonians, believed in an intermediate state for the dead, as the legend of Izdubar, for instance, shows, which relates that the spirit of Heabani was at first sent to a dark and terrible place, but finally, upon the intercession of his friend, was received into the land of the blessed.

Classic literature furnishes the famous testimony of Plato. A passage in the *Phaidon,* to which Eusebius already called attention,[2] reads: "When the dead have arrived at the place to which the demon leads them, they are first judged as to whether or not they have lived rightly, and if it becomes evident that they have lived in a sort of middle way, they enter their boats and, after crossing the Acheron, enter a pool, where they dwell and by being purged and doing penance for their injustices, they are freed of their wicked deeds; for their good deeds, however, they receive honor, each according to his merits."

Even more remarkable is a passage in *Gorgias* (524): "When the disembodied souls appear before the judge, he examines them all ..... Whenever he sees a soul disfigured and soiled by sin, he forthwith sends it contumeliously to prison, where it has to suffer appropriate pains ..... They to whom such a penance proves profitable, are such as have committed pardonable faults, but this profit they gain only through pain and suffering, in Hades as well as here; for in no other way can they be freed from their iniquities."

Virgil makes the soul of Anchises say to his son Aeneas:

"Nay, when at last the life has fled
"And left the body cold and dead,
"E'en then there passes not away
"The painful heritage of clay.
"Full many a long-contracted strain
"Perforce must linger deep in grain.

[2] *Praep. Evang.*, I, 11, 38, 4; *Phaed.*, 113D.

"So penal sufferings they endure
"For ancient crime to make them pure.
"Some hang aloft in open view
"For winds to pierce them through and through
"While others purge their guilt deep-dyed
"In burning fire or whelming tide.
"Each for himself, we all sustain
"The durance of our ghostly pain.
"Then to Elysium we repair,
"The few and breathe this blissful air." [3]

No wonder the Church was accused, with a faint appearance of justification, of having adopted the belief in Purgatory from paganism. Against this charge a Protestant, Superintendent-General Frantz, effectively defends her. "One can hardly believe," he says, "that men like Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine, and others, should have been blind or indifferent to the intrusion of pagan customs; but they all consider praying for the dead as an ancient ecclesiastical usage, in which they could find no heathen admixture. No doubt they would have severely censured any abuses savoring of paganism, had there been such. Against a Church which for three centuries purchased and preserved her independence and peculiar characteristics by the blood of her martyrs, one must not be so free to charge that she mixed her customs and usages with pagan abuses, at least not without at the same time admitting that she faithfully kept her ecclesiastical traditions pure and undefiled. . . . . Prayers for the dead are, in their contents as well as in regard to the place they found in ecclesiastical

[3] Aeneid, VI, 739 sqq.

worship, and also as to the sentiments prompting them, a thoroughly Christian institution, the peculiar property of the Christian Church."

It was with great reluctance that Luther relinquished belief in Purgatory, though he afterwards hotly denounced it as a "veritable devil's-mask and an accursed blasphemy." This denial, of course, necessitated the search for a substitute. It was found by attributing to death—to the process of dying—that which, according to Catholic doctrine, is accomplished in Purgatory. Through death, according to orthodox Protestant teaching, the soul is finally purified, sloughs off the last vestiges of sin, and attains to perfection. Thus death would be a great sacrament, which, however, would operate in a purely mechanical and magical way. David Strauss says: "Möhler justly sees herein a mechanical operation, Schleiermacher a magical procedure, both a violent interruption of the natural evolution of human life."[4]

Not a few Protestants favor the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory and try to retain it as well as prayer for the dead, "purged from popish additions." The individual, they say, should not be refused to do what his heart urges him to do, but it should not be imposed as a duty, nor accepted officially by the Church;—an inconsistency which is roundly denounced and strongly criticised by others.[5]

In the *Friedensblätter*, a magazine published to promote the cause of reunion, and edited by P. Strehler in

[4] *Christl. Glaubenslehre*, II, 686.
[5] Röhm, *Konf. Lehrgegensätze*, V, 201 sqq.

Augsburg, many Protestant witnesses are quoted in favor of Purgatory and of prayers for the dead. One Protestant clergyman writes (Vol. VI, p. 114): "In our time, when belief in immortality and the resurrection of the flesh is rejected by the masses of the people, ridiculed as folly or at best professed only in words, I see in prayer for the dead an excellent means of re-awakening this faith, of strengthening and confirming it in those who still have it. Most people nowadays have no serious conception of death, but employ the words *death* and *dying* as if they were devoid of meaning. Many others talk and act as if man were saved simply by dying and being buried. Consequently, it is necessary to prove that he who is dead is by no means merely gone, and that, on the other hand, merely to 'die' is not sufficient to reach Heaven; and one of the best means of establishing this thesis is prayer for the dead."

In this matter the heart is stronger than prejudices and heretical opinions. It can not close itself entirely against the consoling and salutary features of the Catholic dogma of Purgatory. They are, as it were, the balsamic aroma exhaled by truth. We should also make use of them to influence the heart. Here let us merely point out how grief at the loss of beloved relatives and friends is elevated and ennobled by this faith; that portentous gains result for our own life from our relations to the Holy Souls; that private devotions and public worship are greatly enriched by the pious remembrance of the departed, and that in the world beyond a wide field for Christian mercy and charity is opened up by it.

Chapter VI

A DESCRIPTION OF PURGATORY

A lively faith in Purgatory and the thought that possibly, or rather probably, our beloved dead are still detained there, will always be accompanied by a desire to penetrate more deeply into the mysteries of that domain, and to obtain a clearer conception of the life and sufferings of the Poor Souls. This permissible curiosity, this loving interest, must be taken into consideration by the preacher. Let him introduce his hearers to Purgatory by a graphic description of it. This is his duty as the officially appointed advocate of the Poor Souls. The mere general assertion that these souls suffer and are in need of help, does not move the heart and will of men, be it repeated never so often.

But we are facing a difficult task, which requires much meditation, discretion, and prudence. Homiletic literature shows sad examples of a want, not only of good taste, but also of dogmatic precision. The consequences are deplorable: the critically inclined will, on hearing things of that kind, simply give up the faith; people of more refined feelings are repelled; the common people are easily led into superstition.

Guiding principles and practical directions will, therefore, be welcome.

The first question is: How can we ourselves gain the necessary insight into that mysterious realm? There is no other key to its gates than faith. "Where faith does

not give us sufficient information," says Bishop Prohászka, "let us apply to charity; we must love in order to see."[1]

Only a familiarity born of faith and charity, and frequent prayerful communion with the Poor Souls can make us feel at home in Purgatory, so much at home indeed, says Father Faber, "as in a favorite hospital where the inmates greet our visits with a gladsome smile." Faith and charity alone enlighten our hearts and minds, and teach us to draw from the few words of Scripture and the dogma sparks that illumine this realm of suffering like a flash of lightning.

There is still another and very valuable guide at our disposal, namely, the Sacred Liturgy. In her liturgy the Church gives us a beautiful object lesson of Purgatory, and brings us, so to say, almost within reach of it. The funeral Rite, the *Officium Defunctorum,* the Requiem Mass, the rich abundance of prayers for the dead: all this is surely worth being studied and meditated upon by the preacher. The homiletic value of the various Requiem Masses is well shown in a series of lectures delivered at the second homiletic course of Ravensburg (Württemberg) by Dr. Reck.[2] The *Officium Defunctorum* has been studied from this viewpoint by Dr. Fritz.[3] Cardinal Wiseman has given us soul-stirring meditations on the funeral rite. K. Müller, in his book *Das Kirchenjahr* (The Ecclesias-

[1] *Der König, dem alle leben,* Kempten, 1911, p. 17.

[2] *Vorträge auf dem zweiten homiletischen Kurs in Ravensburg,* 9-11 September 1913 (Rottenburg, 1913).

[3] *Das Officium Defunctorum* in homilet. Vorträgen erklärt, Ratisbon, 1888.

tical Year) beautifully says: "In her liturgy for the dead the Church combines dignified gravity with perfect clearness, depth and consistency in her views of God and of the life to come and deeply touching, majestic sorrow with unwavering hope; humble awe and resignation with tender compassion and love; in short, sentiments and feelings such as only an infinitely pure, magnanimous and strong heart can feel, whilst he that recites these prayers becomes imbued also with the same holy sentiments with which the Poor Souls are filled since their departure from this world until their entrance into heaven."

It has been well said that the ecclesiastical liturgy for the dead is dramatic in character, and this must be borne in mind if we wish to understand it in all its parts. As if acting in a drama, the Church accompanies her children from the moment of their demise, enters eternity with them, trembles with them before the Judge, leads them into His presence, and recommends them to His mercy; then she flies with them to Purgatory and stays with them through all the phases of their purgation, through the entire gamut of pains and joys: and in doing all this she enters so completely into their feelings and shows such tender devotion that she identifies herself with them, as it were, speaks for them, weeps with them, laments, atones, and suffers with them, intercedes for them as their advocate, sponsor, and mediator in the tremendous process which begins with the last breath of life, is decided by the supreme Judge, leads to the prison of Purgatory, and ends with the soul's triumphal entry into eternal glory.

"The *Officium Defunctorum* is composed after the manner of a drama. The dramatis personae are, first of all, the souls in Purgatory, of whom we are reminded, also, and visibly, by the corpse placed in our midst or by the *tumba* that takes its place. When the choir chants the *Invitatorium,* as a prelude to the Matins, or sometimes without an introduction, as at Lauds and Vespers, the Holy Souls appear and make their voices heard. The old *Ordo Romanus X* directs that the office should be recited '*in persona defuncti.*' Other ancient *ordines* emphasize this even more strongly. The same view underlies the custom of placing slips of paper into the hands of the dead, which they are supposed to read, confessing their sins, asking the living for their intercession or expressing their faith and hope. In the inscriptions on the tombstones found in the Catacombs the dead are frequently introduced as asking for the prayers of those passing by. This is, in particular, the case with regard to the psalms and lesson which are recited in the name of the departed. Whatever the dead man, if he were able to speak, would say to us, we hear from the lips of the whole chorus (psalms) or of some of its members (lessons). Thus the departed souls reveal their condition and express the emotions of their heart, which, in the main, are these: They still are trembling as a result of the terror and pains endured on their deathbed, in the agony, and in the judgment; they feel the heavy hand of a chastising God; they are crushed by contrition for their sins; consumed by a most intense yearning for their redemption, but at the same time enjoy unspeakable consolations in consequence of being certain of

salvation. Sad and mournful waiting, bitter sorrow, painful longing, joyous hope, yea, even glad anticipation of eternal beatitude: these are the strains reaching us from the Holy Souls. At times, these emotions coalesce and intermingle; again one entire psalm is tuned to the same strain of feelings as to a keynote, we ourselves looking on the while and listening, deeply moved by what we see and hear.

"As the psalmody is concluded, the Poor Souls are silent for a moment, and now *we* speak *in persona propria.* Thus at the end of each psalm and at the end of the entire psalmody of Vespers, of the three Nocturns, and of the Lauds. Hence the souls are here spoken of in the third person, whilst before they acted and spoke for themselves in the first person (*'Placebo . . . . . ; Hei mihi . . . . . ; Deus misereatur nostri,' . . . . .* etc.) We pray and speak of that which moves our heart in sympathetic meditation. We turn to God and plead for the Poor Souls in Christian charity: *'Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine'; 'Erue, Domine, animas eorum; . . . . collocet eos Dominus cum principibus populi sui.'* We console ourselves and them: *'Beati mortui, qui in Domino moriuntur,'* at the end of Vespers and Lauds, as if to say: They who have died in the grace of God cannot suffer forever, but eternal bliss assuredly awaits them. In the responses after the lessons this change of person does not take place; they are, like the lessons, words of the Poor Souls themselves. Only the response of the second lesson of the first Nocturn is a supplication of the choir, which at the end of each third response adds: *'Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine!'*

"The final solution of the touching drama is brought about by a third person: Christ, the Lord. Above the voices of the Poor Souls, whose plaintive songs of yearning hope we have heard, above the voices of their brethren on earth, who were pleading for them with prayerful sighs, there now arises the voice of Christ: *'Omne, quod dat mihi Pater, ad me veniet, et eum, qui venit ad me, non eiciam foras'* (Vespers), and: *'Ego sum resurrectio et vita, qui vivit et credit in me, non morietur in aeternum'* (Lauds). These two anthiphons are spoken *in persona Christi,* just as the psalms and lessons are spoken *in persona defuncti.* Since the eternal Truth, the almighty Lord of life and death Himself, has pledged His love and help to the departed, a happy end is secured. The plaints and doubts of the Poor Souls are answered, their hopes and desires can no longer be confounded, and gratefully choir and souls chant in unison the joyful *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus.* At the solemn promise of the Lord, finally, the choir once more prostrates itself before Him at the conclusion of Vespers and Lauds, in order with newly awakened and strengthened confidence to offer supplications in the Preces and the Oratio.

"We must not, however, omit to remark that the Poor Souls do not always and exclusively speak from their present place in Purgatory. Frequently they are occupied with an earlier stage in the history of their last things. The scene, so to say, is not always Purgatory, but sometimes another place where the last things of man are consummated: the deathbed, the grave, the place or moment of judgment, are vividly

recalled to mind. From this view-point must be explained some of the prayers of the choir which would otherwise seem to contradict the dogma." [4]

Wonderful, enchanting poetry is embodied in this liturgy. It is replete with heart-rending sadness, tender love, and thrilling mysticism. With the love and tenderness of a mother the Church communes with her suffering children in Purgatory; she visits them daily, cheers and comforts them, weeps with them and sings hymns of hope with them. This spirit of the liturgy should inspire every sermon on Purgatory. To the chords of this harp the priest should attune his preaching. Father Faber says: "The Saints have cast such bright lights on those fiery landscapes that the geography of Purgatory is nearly as familiar to us as that of the known surface of the earth." This is an exaggeration. We owe the Saints many a precious enrichment of our knowledge of Purgatory, and the preacher will not ignore what holy souls have told us about their abode, for their sense of the supernatural is deepened and enlightened by private revelation and through continual prayer, often also by heroic sacrifices for the Holy Souls. They had intimate relations and communed with them, as we do with our fellowmen on earth. The many communications and sayings of the Saints regarding Purgatory will be utilized in the following considerations.

On the other hand, however, caution must be used with regard to detailed descriptions of Purgatory, even those that are found in approved visions of the Saints.

[4] F. A. Hoeynck, *Das Officium Defunctorum*, Kempten, 1893, pp. 34 sqq.

Msgr. Gutberlet points out that the ecclesiastical approbation does not guarantee the truth or reality of a vision, but merely testifies that it contains nothing contrary to faith and morals. Furthermore, there is doubtless a great deal of the human and merely natural element mingled with such visions, some of which bear such a remarkable resemblance to certain pathological hallucinations that their provenience from the same source can hardly be questioned. That these revelations on Purgatory are rather subjective and symbolical is shown by the punishments described, which are said to consist in all kinds of bodily torments, although the souls in Purgatory are disembodied spirits.[5]

A peculiar and unique description of Purgatory is that contained in Dante's "Purgatorio." It is perhaps the most perfect, at any rate, the most charming and most delightful part of this gigantic trilogy. We shall see how, especially in the "Purgatorio," the theologian and the poet walk hand in hand, as it were, and what perfectly corrrect and enlightened theological views are conceived and put forth with the highest poetical tenderness and delicacy of feeling. The poet can render valuable services to the preacher who will deeply study the spirit and sense of this work, and not merely borrow a few quotations from it. We must, however, not forget that a poet is not a preacher, nor a preacher a poet, and that a poet, being an artist, must materialize spiritual things and, consequently, cannot be a model to the preacher in all things.

[5] Heinrich-Gutberlet, *Dogm. Theologie*, X, 580 sqq.

Chapter VII

PURGATORY, NEITHER HELL NOR PARADISE

As there is a great lack of satisfactory representations of Purgatory in the plastic arts, and the customary pictures differ little from those of hell, so, too, the homiletic descriptions of Purgatory are sometimes rather objectionable. Those of former times too closely resembled hell. The narratives of certain mystics did not exercise a wholesome influence upon the descriptions of Purgatory found in ascetical books and in sermons. Purgatory becomes a hellish pool, a furnace heated by the devils, a chamber of horrors differing from hell only in duration. To quote but one example: Franz Suter, in his "Unter-Irdische Goldgrub, d. i. Trewhertziger Bericht von dem Zustand der armen Seelen im Fegfewr" (Zug, 1698) gives a horrid description of the physical torments of the Poor Souls, emphasizing in particular the intolerable stench pervading their abode!

It is certainly reprehensible if even more recent sermon books still assign to the devil "hangman's services" in Purgatory, basing their assertions on the text, "*Ne tradas bestiis animas confidentes Tibi*" in the liturgy, or on Matth. XVIII, 34, "The Lord delivered him to the torturers." The dramatical character of the liturgy should be duly considered in interpreting such passages. When it speaks of the snares of the devil, it simply refers to the moment of death and not to the soul's sojourn in Purgatory. Since St. Thomas (*Append. ad*

Suppl., qu. 2, a. 3) and St. Bonaventure (IV, dist. 20, p. 1, a. 1, qu. 4) have emphatically denied that the Poor Souls are tortured by the devils, this assertion ought to disappear from sermons. It is also objectionable to sum up the state of the Poor Souls in the words "pain and torture, and nothing else," and to exclude from Purgatory even the joy of mutual companionship on the ground that this would not alleviate, but rather enhance, their suffering.

We must carefully guard against all such exaggerations. They may be well-meant; the speaker may think that they add strength and impressiveness to his plea for the Poor Souls; but this is a false notion. His aim in preaching on the Holy Souls is not to rouse a passing emotion or to stir up sentimental feelings, which are merely ephemeral, but to establish lasting and intimate relations and loving familiarity between the living and the dead. For this end, however, the above-mentioned method is entirely inappropriate, because one-sided descriptions of Purgatory repel rather than attract. Who, indeed, would like to be in Purgatory, even only in thought, if nothing but horror and fright, nothing but misery and want awaited him there?

A sermon on Purgatory should depict not only the torments and sufferings of the Poor Souls, but also the bright side of their existence, the consoling, glad, and joyful element in their life. That this is not wanting can, as we shall see, be deduced from the dogma itself. It has been well said[1] that we should not make Purgatory a vestibule of hell, since it is equally, if

[1] Oswald, *Eschatologie*, 118.

not more so, a vestibule of Heaven. In this respect, too, the ecclesiastical liturgy is typical and instructive. In the *Officium Defunctorum* and in the prayers for the dead joyful strains every now and then interrupt the lamentations and expressions of woe and pain, and brighten the sadness. Even those mystics who indulge in exaggerated descriptions of the tortures of Purgatory, descriptions not to be imitated by the preacher, admit considerable differences in the degree of suffering and speak of regions in Purgatory that resemble Paradise.[2] St. Bonaventure emphasizes the essential difference between the pains of hell and those of Purgatory, and excludes from the latter a sadness entirely devoid of consolation and joy.[3] There are especially four great minds who have given its due place to the bright side of Purgatory and whose writings may well serve as models for the preacher, namely, Dante, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Catherine of Genoa, and St. Francis de Sales.

Dante's "Purgatorio," with its soft and tender tones and the sweet harmony of its descriptions, in spite of pain and suffering, invites us to stay and hold long and intimate converse with the Poor Souls. It is difficult indeed to ascend the penitential mount with its seven terraces, on which the last remnants of the seven capital sins are being expiated; but between steep slopes and high cliffs there are lovely valleys with a rich variety of flowers and balsamic aromas. How different from hell:

> "Ah, how far unlike to these
> "The straits of hell; here songs to usher us,
> "There shrieks of woe! . . "(*Purg.*, XII, 105).

[2] See Bautz, *Das Fegfeuer*, Mayence, 1883, pp. 153 sqq.
[3] *Breviloquium*, VII, 2.

The poet hears voices and hymns, "voices in strain ineffable," a song "which gave birth to pleasure and to pain" (XXIII, 10). He listens to a *Te Deum* accompanied by lovely music, and sacred visions arise in his soul:

"The strains came o'er mine ear, e'en as the sound
"Of choral voices, that in solemn chant
"With organ mingle ...." (IX, 135).

Deeply they sigh, those souls, under the penal torments imposed on them; but they are content and fairly

"Drink up the sweet wormwood of affliction" (XXXIII, 86);

one soul calls it pain but:

"Pain, said I ? solace rather ...." (XXIII, 66).

The life of the Holy Souls is beautified by harmony, peace, and love:

"..... Straight I heard
"Voices, and each one seemed to pray for peace
"And for compassion to the Lamb of God
"That taketh sins away. Their prelude still
"Was *Agnus Dei;* and through all the choir,
"One voice, one measure ran, that perfect seemed
"The concord of their song...." (XVI, 14 sqq.)

The topmost terrace is a veritable paradise of charming delights. In the tops of the trees warbling birds salute the dawn of morning with jubilant notes:

"Upon their top the feathered choristers
"Applied their wonted art, and with full joy
"Welcomed those hours of prime, and warbled shrill
"Amid the leaves, that to their jocund lays
"Kept tenor ....." (XXVIII, 14).

Here we see the glory of heaven beaming forth, symbolized in parables and allegories.

From St. Bernardine of Siena (1380—1444) we have three sermons on the Holy Souls, intended for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of Easter week.[4] They are not elaborate discourses, but rather sketches, with an abundance of dogmatic and apologetical matter in scholastic form. The first deals with the existence of Purgatory. The second with its location, its inhabitants and their punishments, the twelve joys of the Poor Souls, and, finally, the advantages of our praying for them. The third solves the "*dubia*" remaining after the two preceding sermons and recapitulates the twelve joys, describing them more explicitly. These descriptions are free from exaggeration and were very likely influenced "*in mitius*" by Dante. They treat of the beauty of Purgatory: even its punishments are beautiful because they reflect the glory of God. According to Ps. C, 1, the Poor Souls sing hymns of praise not only to God's mercy, but also to His justice. Their joys are analyzed with delicacy and profound reverence. As such are mentioned: their permanent stability in goodness; their perfect conformity to the will of God; their union with the Saints in Heaven; their participation in the spiritual life and the spiritual goods of the faithful on earth; their spiritual intercourse with them; the benefits of the living; the special intercession of individual souls; the general suffrages of all Christendom; their progress in spiritual perfection; and, finally—a very tender thought, charac-

[4] *De Evangelio Aeterno*, ed. de la Haye, II, 451 sqq.

terizing the unselfishness of the Holy Souls,—their joy at the great advantages accruing to their friends and benefactors from the good works they do on their behalf.

Very earnestly we recommend to priests the perusal of the little treatise on Purgatory by St. Catherine of Genoa (1447—1510). It was written at her dictation by her pupil, Hector Vernezza, and is one of the most remarkable literary documents of the Middle Ages. Its few pages contain the profoundest thoughts that can be found on the life of the Poor Souls. Only a person who suffered a veritable purgatory during her own life, and cultivated lifelong intimacy with the Poor Souls, whose eye for the spiritual was, moreover, supernaturally sharpened,—only such a one, I say, could transmit this information, which can stand the test of the severest theological scrutiny from nearly every point of view. It is wonderful with what clearness of thought and warmth of heart, with what simplicity and unaffectedness of speech, with what noble moderation and modesty the most difficult questions and deepest secrets of the world beyond are treated and elucidated by St. Catherine. St. Francis de Sales recognized the value of this little book and appropriated its leading thoughts. Even Leibnitz appreciated it, and Gutberlet does not hesitate to make use of St. Catherine's views in his dogmatic treatise on Purgatory. It will suffice here to say that in her descriptions not only the sufferings, but also the joys of the Poor Souls are fully appreciated.

It will, we trust, be of service to the pulpit orator if we mention here the basic thoughts of St. Francis de

Sales on this subject, as J. P. Camus, Bishop of Belley, has compiled them from the Saint's writings:

"The thought of Purgatory is far more apt to fill us with consolation than with fear. Most people dread Purgatory only because they think more of their own advantage and self-love than of the honor of God. This must be attributed mainly to the fact that priests who speak about it from the pulpit, usually depict only punishments and pains, but never the gladness and the peace which these Holy Souls enjoy amid all their suffering. Even though it is true that the pains of Purgatory are so severe that the worst pains of this life cannot be compared with them, yet, on the other hand, the interior delights of those holy souls are so wonderful that no earthly happiness can equal them: for

1. these souls are in continual union with God;

2. they have resigned themselves perfectly to His holy will; their will is so thoroughly in accord with the will of God, that they will only what He wills, so that even if the gates of Heaven were opened to them, they would not attempt to appear before God, as long as they still perceive any stains or sins in themselves;

3. they purify themselves voluntarily and in love, only to please God;

4. they are willing to be where they are in the manner most pleasing to God, and as long as it pleases Him;

5. they are impeccable; they have not the slightest impulse to impatience, and do not commit the smallest faults;

6. they love God above all things with a perfect, pure, and unselfish love;

7. they are comforted by the angels;

8. they are certain of their salvation, and confirmed in a hope which can never be confounded;

9. their bitterest bitterness is wrapt in peace;

10. even though Purgatory, as far as torments are concerned, is a hell, yet it is a paradise in respect of the sweetness which God's love infuses into the hearts of the Holy Souls,—a love stronger than death and more powerful than hell;

11. this state is to be wished for rather than feared; for its flames are flames of holy desire and love;

12. yet, they are terrible because they retard that perfection which consists in the vision of God and in loving, praising, and glorifying Him throughout eternity.

"On these points he [St. Francis] recommended the reading of St. Catherine's treatise. I [Bishop Camus], acting on his advice, read it several times very attentively, and each time I was more delighted, and my mind became more enlightened. I must confess that I never read anything more satisfying on this subject. I even invited some Protestants to read it, and they were greatly edified. One especially, a man of science, admitted that if he had read this book before his conversion, it would have convinced him more than all the disputations he had engaged in on this subject.

"But it may be objected: If this is so, why are the Holy Souls in Purgatory recommended so urgently to our prayers? Because, notwithstanding these advantages, their condition is very painful and truly deserving of

our compassion, and because, moreover, that glory which they would render to God in the enjoyment of perfect peace in Heaven, is delayed. These two reasons should impel us to aid them by prayers, fasting, almsgiving, and good works of all kinds, in particular by the holy sacrifice of the Mass, so that they may soon be liberated from their sufferings."[5]

Of more recent descriptions we will quote that of Ven. Ann Catherine Emmerich: "I saw Purgatory. It seemed to me that I was led to a deep abyss. I saw a large expanse. It is touching to see how the Poor Souls are so sad and quiet. Yet, they have something in their faces, as if there was gladness in their hearts from remembering the mercy of God ..... I saw on their faces an indescribable joy, which seemed to me a portent of their near redemption."[6]

These are valuable hints and models for the preacher. It would, of course, be out of place, and at variance with the proximate purpose of a sermon on this topic, to present to the faithful only the joys of the Poor Souls, transforming Purgatory into a garden of pleasure. The main emphasis must always be laid on their sufferings, because the chief purpose of these sermons is an appeal for help. Yet we must never loose sight of, and acquaint the faithful with the fact that the specific atmosphere of Purgatory is a mixture of sorrow and joy. The joys of the Poor Souls are as numerous, as indescribable, as inexhaustible, as their pains. "I do not think," says

[5] *Geist des hl. Franz von Sales. Ausgezogen aus den Schriften des J. P. Camus*, Munich, 1832, pp. 394 sqq.

[6] *Leben*, ed. by Schmöger, I, 287.

St. Catherine of Genoa, "that there is any joy comparable with the joy of the souls in Purgatory, except that of the Saints in Heaven."

Sweet and bitter waters here flow from the same fountain. What begets pain, also brings joy; there is no sorrow that is not mitigated by joy, no joy that is not embittered by pain. Joy and sorrow do not contend with, exclude, or neutralize each other. They are contained within, interpenetrate, and equalize one another. And this indefinable mixture produces the peculiar climate, as it were, of Purgatory.

For us it will always remain a mystery how so much sorrow can be mingled with so much joy, without one neutralizing the other. But there are analogies which may help us to understand. Thus there were saints and martyrs who found a veritable delight in the midst of excruciating torments, who fairly yearned to suffer, and who reversed the maxim "To suffer or to die," by making it read: "To suffer, not to die." The severest torments, as they earnestly assure us, merely made them imagine they were sitting at a wedding-feast or walking amid roses. Now, if pain and joy can co-exist and interpenetrate each other in such a way even here on earth, how much more in the life beyond? The most perfect analogy of this is furnished by Jesus Christ Himself, in Whose sacred Person during the Passion excess of suffering did not exclude or interfere with the infinite beatitude of His divine nature. But, as Gutberlet remarks, this is like trying to explain a small mystery by a greater and still more incomprehensible one.

Highly gifted persons who lead an intensive spiritual life may sometimes unite in themselves the sharpest contrasts of bright and dark thoughts and bear in their hearts simultaneously the highest joy and the deepest grief. Far more is this the case with the Holy Souls. They are endowed with great gifts; they are destined for the highest beatitude; they have already entered the realm of the infinite and lead an interior life of such concentration and depth as is impossible for a soul still confined within a body. And this life is an ebb and flow of joy and grief, like a surging sea. The proportion of either element in the blend is, of course, not always the same. The mixture for the individual soul depends on the degree of punishment which it has to bear. Generally speaking, the purifying process probably takes its course in such a way that the pain steadily decreases, whilst the joy increases in the same degree, until the pain is finally absorbed and consumed by the joy. "The joy," says St. Catherine, "increases in the same measure as the rust decreases, and the soul opens itself to the rays of the divine light, and thus the one grows, while the other diminishes, until the time of purgation is over." The last stage may perhaps be a state in which the soul no longer suffers, but merely hopes and waits. Bishop Schneider sums up the matter thus in his book *The Other Life*: "A most perfect rest and an intensely burning desire, abundant consolation in bitter grief, most patient bearing of inconceivable pains, joyful resignation in temporary dejection, a most wonderful intermingling of fortune and misfortune, of weal and woe,

a kind of heaven in a kind of hell: such is the mystery of Purgatory."

But we must not stop at these general considerations. In preaching we shall have to tell more specifically wherein the sufferings and the joys of the Poor Souls consist. It is not advisable, however, to treat the two (sufferings and joys) separately because their co-existence and mutual penetration constitute a peculiarity of the life in Purgatory. In the following chapters we shall attempt, within the limits of dogma and sound theological teaching, to draw a picture of the life led by the Holy Souls in Purgatory, and in doing so shall pay particular attention to this intermingling of pain and joy, in order to give the proper tone and tint to the picture.

[1] *Das andere Leben*, p. 601.

Chapter VIII

PENAL SUFFERING

As in hell, so in Purgatory, Catholic theologians distinguish a *poena sensus* (positive pain of sense) and a *poena damni* (loss of the beatific vision of God). St. Thomas says: *"In purgatorio erit duplex poena, una damni, in quantum scilicet retardantur a divina visione, alia sensus, secundum quid ab igne corporali puniuntur"* (*App. ad Suppl.*, qu. 2, a. 1). The *poena damni* is the punishment inflicted for abandoning God. Since this abandonment of God on the part of the Poor Souls was not total, but only partial, their loss is but temporary and partial, as the separation from God in Purgatory does not prevent a most intimate communion of love with Him. The *poena sensus,* the physical pain, is the punishment inflicted for inordinate adherence to creatures. Venial sin, too, implies such an adherence, and in the other world temporal punishments can be expiated only by penal suffering.

That the Poor Souls are punished, tortured, and purged, is an article of faith. In what this torture consists, whether it is caused by real fire, and whether this fire is a material or an immaterial one, different from or the same as that of hell; all these questions the Church has, as previously mentioned, not definitely decided. The priest may set forth the opinion that it is a real, material fire. He will find the arguments in favor of this opinion discussed at length in Heinrich-Gutberlet's Dogmatic

Theology. He must be careful, however, to abstain from branding the opposite opinion as heretical, and add that there is no dogmatic definition on this question, and one is not bound to adopt either the one or the other view. If we accept the theory of a real fire, we shall not escape the difficulty how disembodied spirits can be affected by material fire. To indulge in a lengthy discussion of this question in the pulpit would hardly be advisable, and the speaker would do well to confine himself to the reply given by St. Augustine (*De Civit. Dei*, 21, 10), that the soul even in this life, though confined in a material body, is liable to pain. Gutberlet, though strongly in favor of a real fire, concedes that in some cases the word "fire" should not be pressed, especially when belief in a real fire in Purgatory would meet with great difficulties, as, for instance, in the case of converts, or of Catholics whose faith is weak. In such cases we may explain that Purgatory need not necessarily be understood in the sense of a "purifying fire," but may, without prejudice to the dogma, be described as any kind of purging pain. In dealing with believing Catholics, however, he (Gutberlet) thinks that such reserve is not justified and might even give offense.

It is true that, if we interpret "fire" in a purely figurative sense, the *poena sensus* can no longer be defined but coincides with the *poena damni*. In that case we could only point out—which, as a rule, is all that is necessary,—that the Poor Souls are subject to real penal torments, and that these torments are greater than any we can imagine in the light of our own experience. This thought is expressed with great emphasis by St. Au-

gustine: "*Quamvis salvi per ignem, gravior tamen erit ille ignis, quam quidquid homo potest pati in hac vita, et nostis, quanta hic possit pati.*" (*In Ps.* 37) ..... "*Ille ignis purgatorii durior erit, quam quidquid in hoc saeculo poenarum aut sentire aut videre aut cogitare quis potest.*" (*Serm.* 104, in append. 41, *De Sanctis,* n. 5). St. Catherine of Genoa repeatedly says that it is impossible to give an adequate description of these sufferings. "There are," she says, "no words, figures or symbols which can explain the torments of the souls in Purgatory ..... They suffer such extraordinary pains that no tongue can describe and no mind conceive them unless they are revealed by a special grace of God .... Such a spark God by His grace showed to this soul [herself], but I can not express it with my tongue ..... No tongue can tell, no mind can comprehend what Purgatory really is; I only see that the pain is as great as in hell."

Bourdaloue says in a sermon: "You ask me what these souls suffer; the answer would be easier if you had asked me what they do *not* suffer."

That there is a difference of quantity as well as of quality between the sufferings on earth and those of Purgatory may be concluded, as St. Bonaventure remarks, from the fact that the latter are imposed solely by God's punitive justice, whereas during this life a healing drop of mercy is instilled into all suffering. The purgatorial sufferings have no longer the character of a means of grace or of a remedy, nor are they meritorious, but simply punishments, penal and atoning pains.

Gutberlet points out that the conditions of the spiritual world and of eternity are differently proportioned than those on earth. "We are here as in the age of childhood. The child, weak and tender, is chastised and corrected with childish punishments. In the advanced and more mature age of the other world, the punishments must be more severe. Between this material world and the spiritual world to come, between man's life here on earth and his life in eternity, there is greater difference than between childhood and mature manhood. We might compare the relations between this life and the next with the proportions prevailing between the meridians of earth and those of the heavens. To one degree on the earthly meridian corresponds a distance of about 69 miles; the farther away from the earth, the greater this distance grows, and in the heavens it becomes incalculable. Thus, also, earthly conditions assume altogether different and incomprehensible proportions in the spiritual world." Finally, it appears that the passibility of the disembodied soul is greatly increased by the intensity and concentration of that life which, in yonder realm of silence and solitude, is never broken by sleep or rest, by distractions and diversions.

In considering the factors that aggravate the sufferings of the Poor Souls in Purgatory, we must not, however, forget those that transfigure them. Note above all that these Holy Souls enter upon their sufferings entirely of their own free will and persevere in them joyfully. This is emphasized by the most enlightened mystics, especially by St. Catherine of Genoa. "When the Soul," she says, "after being separated from the

body, does not find herself in her inborn original purity, and sees that the obstacle preventing her from being united with God cannot be removed in any other way except by purgation, she immediately and gladly casts herself into Purgatory. And if there were no such means for removing the obstacle, there would be produced in that soul a hell worse than Purgatory." Repeatedly the same Saint affirms that if the Soul had the choice of entering Heaven or Purgatory in the state in which she sees herself, she would prefer the latter, yea, would cast herself into a thousand hells rather than appear in God's presence with all her stains. The same thought is expressed by F. W. Faber: "As soon as the soul, seeing God, becomes aware of its unworthiness for Heaven, it flies voluntarily to Purgatory, as the dove to its nest in the shadow of the woods." In Cardinal Newman's beautiful "Dream of Gerontius" the angel says to the soul:

"And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself; for, though
"Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinn'd,
"As never thou didst feel; and wilt desire
"To slink away, and hide thee from His sight:
"And yet wilt have a longing aye to dwell
"Within the beauty of His countenance.
"And these two pains, so counter and so keen,—
"The longing for Him, when thou seest Him not;
"The shame of self at thought of seeing Him,—
"Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory."

These souls burn with the desire of seeing God, yet it would be intolerable for them to enter into the beatific

vision with all their imperfections. Far from the truth, therefore, is the horrible word of Luther that the souls in Purgatory continually sin because they always seek rest and detest their pains, thus rebelling against the will of God. Quite naturally their nature abhors suffering, just as the human nature of Christ on Mt. Olivet trembled and shuddered at the thought of the coming Passion; but they are thoroughly resigned to the divine will; they are ready to suffer, not because suffering hurts, but because it cleanses. They clearly perceive the nature and purpose of this painful fire by which God's infinite holiness, justice, and goodness are revealed to them, and recognize that it is the only way to surmount the barrier which separates them from Heaven, to efface the rust of sin which makes them extremely unhappy. Therefore they dive down into the flames as into a welcome bath. They not only accept these pains voluntarily, but with joy and fervor, nay, with enthusiasm, considering them a blessing as well as a chastisement. The only passion of which they are still capable is that of suffering, from which they would not withdraw even if they could, and which has become the element of their life in a far higher degree even than for some Saints, who could not live without suffering while on earth. If they could find another Purgatory, says St. Catherine, which would break down the obstacle faster, they would hasten to cast themselves into it. They also perceive in themselves the cleansing and purifying effects of their torments, and from this draw much consolation. Thus the poet can call them "the elect of God, whose penal woes both hope and justice mitigate"

(*Purg.*, XIX, 74) and hears them intone hymns of praise, gratitude, hope, confidence and peace.

Thus Purgatory is a realm of the greatest, but also of the most voluntary pain, which is borne patiently and joyfully. There is no reason why the community of life and suffering of the Poor Souls should be considered as sharpening, and not also as consoling and mitigating, their punishment. It is not certain whether they can pray for one another, but they are undoubtedly able to console, encourage, and gladden one another by a benevolence and charity of which only holy and noble souls are capable. Ven. Ann Catherine Emmerich says: "It is impossible to express how touching is their appearance and how they rejoice over the redemption of one and bewail the sufferings of another and of those that arrive." Dante describes how the whole "mountain" trembles for joy and from the loud jubilation of the spirits

". . . . . when any spirit feels itself
"So purified that it may rise, or move
"For rising; and such loud acclaim ensues . . . ."
(*Purg.*, XXI, 57).

". . . . . Therefore thou felt'st
"The mountain tremble, and the spirits devout
"Heard'st, over all its limits, utter praise
"To that liege Lord, whom I entreat their joy
"To hasten . . . . . " (*Purg.*, XXI, 70).

St. Catherine of Genoa remarks that such thoughts as: "This or that one will be freed sooner than I," or: "I shall leave Purgatory sooner than he," are never harbored by the Holy Souls.

Chapter IX

THE PAIN OF LOSS

The *poena damni* or *carentia visionis,* that is, temporary exclusion from the vision of God and the beatitude of Heaven, is the atonement for imperfect adherence to God in this life. The pain it inflicts on the soul can be measured only by analogy. We can truly say with the poet: "Only he who knows what fervent yearning is, knows what I suffer," and are reminded of Dante's words: "I feel for all these unfortunates, but most of all for those who, driven into exile, see their fatherland in their dreams only." (*De Vulg. Eloqu.*). It is a well known fact that yearning for one's home, parents and fatherland may become a veritable disease and cause death, and we see from the life of some saints how a longing for God and a desire for Heaven can become a consuming fire that severs the bond between body and soul.

Incomparably more consuming and more painful is the yearning of the Poor Souls. We may well imagine—and represent it thus in our sermons—that these souls, when they entered eternity at the particular judgment, beheld the Saviour face to face. At that blessed moment love was stirred into a bright flame; the soul was favored with a divine ray of affection from the eyes of the Saviour, telling it that it was not lost, but certain of salvation. In that happy moment the soul sang hymns of joy in infinite exultation. But alas, it only lasted a moment: suddenly the joy was silenced, and

the soul, like the loosened chords of a harp, could only moan and sigh; the glory cast around it reveals, to its utmost fright, dark stains and spots upon itself, and it sees with alarm that the severe gaze of the Judge is fixed upon these stains, and that His countenance no longer reflects beaming benevolence, but displeasure, sadness, and reproach. The consciousness of guilt confounds the soul and crushes it so deeply that it needs no sentence, no cherub with a flaming sword to turn it away. It has only one desire: to disappear, to fly from the sphere of light, and submerge itself in the flames of Purgatory in order to be cleansed and rid of the obstacles that prevent its eternal union with the Saviour.

Like lightning, that joyful moment passed away; momentary beatitude gave way to long-lasting suffering. But the soul can never forget the sight of the Lord; neither His look of love, nor His look of reproach. It beholds His countenance, not in beatific reality, but in painful remembrance. And this remembrance is the daily food of the Souls in Purgatory. Like a consuming fire, it fans the flame of yearning and desire ever afresh. St. Catherine of Genoa illustrates this keen desire of the Poor Souls by the following comparison: "If there were in all the world but one loaf of bread to appease the hunger of all creatures, and hunger could be satisfied by merely looking at this bread; and if man, in spite of his natural instinct to eat, would neither become sick nor die by not eating—this hunger would steadily increase because the natural desire for food would never cease. And if he knew that only the bread

mentioned could satisfy him, and that, without it, his hunger could never be stilled, he would suffer intolerable pains. The nearer he came to this bread, without seeing it, the keener would his desire grow, and the moment he became aware of his inability ever to see this bread, he would suffer the same pains as the damned in hell who are deprived of all hope of ever seeing this bread, which is God, their true Saviour and only Good. But the Poor Souls in Purgatory harbor the firm hope of seeing this bread and of sating themselves perfectly with it. For this reason, they suffer such exceedingly great hunger and are in the most severe distress, because they must wait so long before they may have their fill of this bread, which is Jesus Christ, the true God and Saviour, our Love."

Here on earth the inborn tendency of the soul towards God, which is quickened and strengthened by grace, can be dulled, weakened, and diverted by many and various influences. But the Holy Souls in Purgatory are free from low and earthly thoughts and desires, from the distracting bustle of the world, from idle hopes, and from the burdens and empty pleasures of this life. They clearly recognize God as the highest Good and gravitate towards Him with their whole being. This tendency is so strong in these souls, and becomes so powerful, that it sets the soul afire and drives it upward with irresistible force. "The more ardently we desire a thing," says St. Bernardine of Siena, "the more painfully we feel the want of it. But the desire with which the Holy Souls long to be united with the highest Good is incomparably greater than the strongest possible

desire for any earthly good. The reason is, on the one hand, the sublime knowledge these souls possess of the highest Good and, on the other, their privation of everything outside of God. Separated from their mortal bodies and all earthly things, they have nothing upon which to lean, but aspire to their highest Good with all their faculties, and would soar up to Him without delay, did not God Himself stave them off until the time when every impediment to their union with Him has been removed: and this constitutes the pain of exile." Thus every attempt to reach the highest Good meets with a painful reverse; every effort to rise towards Heaven is in vain; for the time being, those souls are held, as in a vise, by the iron law: *Not yet!* All their yearning and striving is changed into hoping and waiting, and it is not a quiet, peaceful waiting, but embittered by the tormenting thought: "It is my own fault that I can not reach the final goal; had I been just a little more zealous, a little more faithful to duty on earth, I should be in Heaven before now. How easily could I have avoided the things that now cause me such pain!"

If we consider all this, we shall scarcely disagree with those who see in the *poena damni* the chief suffering of Purgatory. And yet this severe pain, too, is richly interwoven with joys and consolations. Although the Poor Souls enjoyed the vision of their Saviour only for a brief instant, still, they *HAVE SEEN HIM;* they can never forget it and the remembrance is like a ray of sunshine to them. They can truly say with Job: *"Scio, quod Redemptor meus vivit"* (XIX, 25). They are no longer dependent on faith alone; they have *seen,* and

by this vision, short though it was, their faith has, as it were, outgrown itself; it has become absolute certainty and shines brightly in the darkness of their separation from God. In the face of their Saviour they read their fate, and His gracious look told them they were certain of salvation. Of this there can be no doubt, as the opposite opinion of Luther was expressly condemned in the Bull "*Exsurge Domine.*" Nor is it permissible, as Thalhofer assumes, so to interpret certain verses of the Psalms or other expressions of the Office for the Dead as if the Poor Souls suffered from fear and apprehension regarding their eternal salvation. In the majestic "mourning symphony" of the liturgy for the dead not every word should be taken literally or interpreted separately. We refer to what we have said before on the dramatic character of the liturgy, which requires that not only the fears and doubts of the mourning survivors be expressed, but also the apprehension and anguish filling the soul on its first journey into the world of spirits, on its momentous way to the Judge, and its fears of the snares of the devil and the yawning abyss of hell.

But since favorable sentence was pronounced, this fear has given way to a triumphant certainty of salvation. Although the Poor Souls suffer severely from their temporary exile, although they cannot forget the flaming glance of the Judge resting on their sins; although they even now shudder under this glance: still, their hope has matured into the certainty: "I am saved; nothing can deprive me of my crown; I shall be eternally happy and I shall see Him, *quem visurus sum ego*

ipse et non alius, et oculi mei conspecturi sunt" (Job XIX, 27). No pain, no grief can be conceived into which this certainty would not inject a few drops of consoling balm, and thus, notwithstanding all their pains and torments, the Church can justly say of the Poor Souls in the Memento of the Mass: *"dormiunt in somno pacis,"* and Cardinal Bellarmine is perfectly right when he says: "Since the Church teaches that the souls of the faithful are resting in peace, we can not say that they are in anguish, nor, what would be worse, that they are in despair; on the contrary, we must believe that they enjoy unspeakable bliss in the midst of their torments, on account of the certain hope they have of salvation." [1]

Finally, these souls are confirmed in sanctifying grace and in the love of God. Their will is endowed with the *"beata impossibilitas peccandi;"* they can will only what is good; they are free from every sinful impulse, free from temptations and trials, united with God by charity and in continual conversation with Him. The separating wall of suffering causes no alienation between God and them. It is love that punishes; it is love that suffers. "It is not because he hates the steel," says Ventura, "that the blacksmith thins it by frequent blows of the hammer, but to make it smooth and bright; the goldsmith casts the gold into the melting pot and exposes it to the fire not because he hates it, but to make it malleable and pure." Thus it is not heartlessness or cruelty, but purest love, which keeps the Poor Souls in Purgatory. *"Tormenta misericordiae,"* says Tertullian, *"Deus amat et punit."* This is perfectly clear to the

[1] *Controv., De Purg.*, II, c. 4.

Holy Souls; the flames of Purgatory reveal to them not only the holiness and justice of God, but also His love and mercy. The atmosphere of Heaven is glory and love; the atmosphere of Purgatory is grace and love; the atmosphere of hell is sin, hatred, and despair. Therefore, the Holy Souls in Purgatory sing a hymn which the reprobates in hell cannot sing: "*Secundum multitudinem dolorum meorum in corde meo consolationes Tuae laetificaverunt animam meam*" (Ps. XCIII, 19).

On the other hand, it is equally true that this faith, this hope, this love, cause keener suffering, increase the longing, and sharpen the pain of waiting. The glow of love, in particular, is at the same time a torturing, consuming fire which causes the Poor Souls severe pain. Unrequited love in its loneliness, its exile, and its isolation, is turned into woe and pain. And the greater this love is, the sharper the sorrow and the pain it begets. "Their future beatitude," says La Luzerne of the Holy Souls, "causes their present torments. Thus it is an uninterrupted ebb and flow of grief and joy which does not allow the Poor Souls to attain to perfect rest."

Chapter X

THE NIGHT OF PURGATORY

For the Poor Souls the "*status viatoris*" is past, the time of acquiring supernatural merits is over, the measure of actual grace is exhausted. They can not repair the negligences of their earthly life by increased fervor in doing good, they can not give satisfaction for the remaining guilt nor for the punishments still due. They are, as the Scholastics express it, no longer capable of "*satisfactio,*" but only of "*satispassio.*" For them has come the night of which Jesus speaks with a certain tremor, "the night in which no man can work" (John IX, 4). This impossibility to work, this inactivity and complete passivity is a veritable night which makes Purgatory resemble a land wrapped in the shadows of death, a land of sadness and gloom where "no order dwells but everlasting horror" (Job X, 21 sq.). This passivity begets pain of a particular kind, to which sufficient attention is hardly ever paid, but which, in truth, greatly saddens the life of the Holy Souls. They are sentenced to a state of inactivity, which, however, is not a state of rest, but full of restlessness and an eager desire to act. The energy of the disembodied soul can not rise to any positive work, can not effect an increase of merit, can not make any progress in virtue, but is absorbed and consumed by suffering;—a condition to which may be applied the Apostle's word: "*Infructuosa opera tenebrarum*" (Eph. V, 11).

To understand this pain more fully, we may point to some analogies it has in human life. Think, for instance, of a delay forced upon a traveler by a quarantine after a protracted absence from home in a strange country. At last he is near home; he had selected the fastest ships and trains; he has already counted the days and hours of his home-coming; he yearns for home with every fibre of his heart. All of a sudden he is stopped and deported into a miserable shanty on the hot sands of a desert, where he enjoys no comforts, no recreation, and has no chance to work. The delay extends hours into days, days and nights into eternities; begets psychic and physical torture, and may even cause bodily sickness in an otherwise strong and healthy man.

Or think of this distressing situation: There are important interests at stake; danger is imminent; yet we can not do anything to protect our interests, to ward off the danger; we can only wait and see. In such a state of forced inactivity a man is apt to wear out his energies and faculties more rapidly than by the most intensive work. Or a man, accustomed to labor hard and successfully in his profession, is afflicted by a lingering disease, stretched upon a bed of pain and condemned to complete idleness. Gloom is apt to shroud his soul like the darkness of night because of the thought that he can no longer work. Yet during our earthly life the ability to acquire merits is not lost together with the ability to work and labor. The Christian always finds a strong support in the knowledge that patience and resignation in suffering are highly meritorious, increase his merits and give him a claim to a richer reward. The

Poor Souls have no such inspiriting knowledge: theirs is only the meagre solace of a convict, that every day of suffering brings the day of release somewhat nearer, though they can not hasten it by good conduct.

The difference, then, between Christians on earth and the Poor Souls in Purgatory is this: to the former, if they are in the state of grace, even pain becomes meritorious; for the latter all work is pain, but a pain devoid of merit. Life in Purgatory is restless suffering and labor without pause, without the interruption even of sleep; and in all this there is something shadowy, something unreal; it lacks the very marrow, the power of the *gratia actualis,* namely, meritorious value. Consequently, the Poor Souls can find no real peace, no satisfaction; with all their spiritual efforts they achieve nothing; they experience no advance in grace or virtue, and can not shorten the time of their exile by a single moment. Their position is like that of a traveler, who with all his heart's urging and earnest desire to get to his destiny, cannot accelerate the motion of the engine by a single second, but uses up all his energy in fretting.

In this state of passivity the Poor Souls must feel doubly that painful want of the sacramental graces which were at their disposal during life. On earth, they were able to draw graces to themselves as through a thousand pores, but, alas, never fully availed themselves of those graces, which would have infused into all their thoughts and actions "powers of the world to come" (Hebr. VI, 5), and would have secured their immediate salvation. They have no church, no priesthood, no sacri-

fice, no sacraments: this lack above all constitutes the poverty of the "Poor Souls. They possess all these spiritual goods, which once formed the wealth of their lives, only in memory; but no pain is greater, says Dante in the "*Inferno,*" than to remember happy days when we are in misery. And in this case the remembrance is further embittered by the insistent thought: "Had you only valued the means of grace more highly and used them more zealously, you would not miss them so keenly now, and you would not have to sigh: *'Pauperes facti sumus nimis'* (Ps. LXXVIII, 8)."

This, then, is "the night in which no man can work." These are the "*poenae tenebrarum,*" of which the liturgy speaks (Resp. of the ninth lesson). Truly a sad existence, a life of misery! The horologue of Purgatory sayeth this incessantly: "Suffer and wait," "Wait and suffer"! A distressing monotony which would act as a soporific if these souls could sleep, or if their pains would permit them to sleep; but the beautiful rythm of sleep and awakening, of action and rest, is wanting; the Holy Souls are restlessly active, but they accomplish nothing; they aspire forward and upward, but all their longing and striving hits their prison bars, strikes an iron wall on which are inscribed the discouraging words: "Not yet; suffer and wait!"

Still, even this woe is not entirely without joy and consolation. Great, holy, and eternal thoughts occupy these souls. They are ever conversing with God in fervent prayer; they ever anew submit willingly to their sufferings and to God's holy will; they rise above themselves on the wings of hope, and interweave the

memories of the past with the prospects of a glorious future. It is true, all this spiritual action and occupation is devoid of merit, and bitter like a penal task; but, at the same time, it is rich in the consolation and joy that naturally flow from holy and noble minds. Prayers and sacred hymns are the sweet music that mitigates this melancholy gloom.

Furthermore, the inability of the Holy Souls to acquire merits for themselves does not entail inability to work for others. Whether the Poor Souls can pray for one another, we do not know; but that they can intercede for the living on earth, notwithstanding the contrary opinion of St. Thomas, is now generally accepted by theologians. We shall have to recur to this point later. This possibility opens to them a beautiful field of activity, of loving and grateful solicitude, even in the night of Purgatory.

Finally, the pain of inactivity and passivity is mitigated by the hope that their loved ones on earth, and all the faithful, will not forget them, will not refuse them the alms of prayer, but will procure for them a share in those means of grace and spiritual treasures which they so sadly miss, and thus shorten the time of their penance. To be sure, it would cause them additional pain if their hope were disappointed, if forgetfulness, levity, or weak faith would deprive them of the salutary intercession of their relatives and friends. But even the most forgotten and forsaken soul is not entirely bereft of help: the Church in her motherly solicitude would not permit that.[2]

[2] Cfr. St. Augustine, *De Cura pro Mort. Gerenda*, c. IV.

Chapter XI

WE AND THE POOR SOULS

It is an article of faith that the Poor Souls in Purgatory are aided by the suffrages of the living, *i. e.*, by such works of piety as the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, alms, fasting, etc.[1] Consequently, it is also *de fide* that these works, provided the required conditions are fulfilled, are effective. It is necessary to emphasize and prove the possibility and efficacy of such action: for only a well-founded conviction concerning this truth will call forth an activity at once energetic and persevering.

The Poor Souls are indebted to God on account of punishments still due, or of venial sins not yet atoned for. They themselves are unable to make active satisfaction; only by "*satispassio*" can they satisfy the demands of divine justice. But there remains the possibility of this satisfaction being made for them by others. This vicarious satisfaction draws its justification and power from the vicarious satisfaction given by Christ, on which our whole salvation rests. The *Catechismus Romanus* beautifully says: "We must proclaim the supreme goodness and clemency of God with the greatest praise and thanksgiving because He has granted to human weakness the privilege that one may satisfy for another, a privilege peculiar to the [satisfactory] part of penance . . . . ; thus it is that we may in some sort bear one another's burdens."[2] The fundamental reason for the

[1] *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. XXV, *Decr. de Purg.*
[2] *Cat. Rom.*, P. II, C. V, qu. 72.

possibility and efficacy of our intercession for the Poor Souls is the dogma of the Communion of Saints. The blessed circle of this communion includes Purgatory. Those who have departed hence in God's grace and love, are still living members of the mystic body of Christ, united through sympathy among themselves and with us (1 Cor. XII, 25 sq.). What a glorious sight is this immense realm of spirits with its three divisions in perpetual intercourse! The Church Militant stretches forth one hand to help the Suffering Church and with the other reaches out for the Church Triumphant. The effects of grace: prayer, satisfaction, assistance, inspiration, faith, hope, and charity are diffused and circulate like the blood in a living body, as beneficial streams from one to the other. No one is alone: as live electric currents are diffused from a battery, so the spirits enjoy their own powers and those of all the rest.

Purgatory is a place of punishment and a place of purgation. Our suffrages for the Poor Souls effect a mitigation and shortening of their punishment as well as a remission of their venial sins, because we are able to make vicarious satisfaction for them. The efficacy of our intercession is dependent on the same conditions which generally render our good works meritorious. Of course, the intention of performing them for the Poor Souls must be added. To obtain the "*meritum de condigno*" and satisfaction in the full sense of these words, the state of grace is necessary.

The preacher will accordingly have to explain to the sinner that if he wishes to help the Poor Souls, he must first of all regain the state of sanctifying

grace. Still, we must beware of exaggerations. We should not say that the sinner can do nothing whatever for the Poor Souls and had just as well omit praying for them, nay, that such prayer is actually sinful. This is theologically false and homiletically wrong. Suffrages that are efficacious *"ex opere operato,"* like the holy Mass, have their satisfactory value even when offered by a sinner. The sinner who gives alms or has Masses offered at the request of the departed, or of some one else, does not rob his good works of their effect by being in the state of sin, because he acts only as agent. The intercessory prayer of a sinner has no satisfactory, but it may have an impetrative value, and find favor with God not because of any merit on his part, but through sheer mercy. Consequently we ought to urge the sinner to be converted, to receive the sacraments, especially on All Souls' Day, suggesting as a particular motive that we can give real and effective help to the Poor Souls only when we are in the state of grace. Nevertheless, the sinner also ought to pray for them and offer up Masses: it certainly is better that he does this than that he does nothing at all.

The disposition of the Holy Souls to profit by the help offered to them may be generally assumed, as they are in the state of grace. St. Augustine remarks: *"Sed eis haec [suffragia] prosunt, qui, cum viverent, ut haec sibi postea prodesse possent, meruerunt,"* which undoubtedly means that their disposition is determined by their merit and conduct, in particular, by their zeal and interest in behalf of the Poor Souls during life. Here,

then, assuredly the words of Jesus apply: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matth. VII, 2).

It may not be superfluous to touch occasionally upon a question which sometimes worries people: What if the soul for whom I pray is not in Purgatory, but in hell or in Heaven? Or if, according to the divine economy of salvation, my prayers do not help? One thing is certain: our prayers are never lost. Whom, then, will they profit? This question cannot be answered with certainty. Possibly they will be applied to some relative of that soul; or to souls for whom no one else prays, or who during life exerted themselves in a special manner for the Poor Souls; or possibly the soul having entered Heaven may be permitted to dispose of such prayers. Be that as it may, we know that our suffrages are not in vain, and those "stranded" spiritual goods are not lost.

The dogma of the possibility and efficacy of intercession for the Poor Souls extends the sphere of life from this world to the world beyond, and opens up for us a new, large field of activity, in which we can labor with an abundance of power and a certitude of success such as is not granted here on earth and in which, as mediators between God's justice and His mercy, we can, in a measure, freely dispense favors, obtain the release of prisoners, lead exiles back to their homes, espouse the cause of the Poor Souls as their accredited advocates and administrators with far-reaching powers, and, as earthly guardian angels, so to speak, adopt these noble, chosen souls, and apply to them immeasurable benefits.

No one who thinks seriously on these matters will fear that by his activity for the Holy Souls in Purgatory his labors and tasks here below will be impaired: they are rather benefited and fructified. Our vision is broadened, our aspirations are turned toward eternity, the social sense is awakened and exercised, and the virtue of mercy and sympathy, so necessary in this life, is fostered.

Chapter XII

THE POOR SOULS AND WE

Life in Purgatory, to our mind, must be a time of continual prayer, uninterrupted even by pain and grief. It is a life of love, of spiritual, though not yet beatific, union with God. We can scarcely assume that the love which those Holy Souls have for God is weaker than ours, or that they are condemned to silence and inertia. God certainly did not deprive them of the language of prayer, or of the possibility of holding converse with Him, even though their prayer, as we saw, is not meritorious, no matter how strong or fervent it may be.

Can the Poor Souls pray for the living on earth, and is their prayer efficacious? Those who answer this question in the negative quote St. Thomas in their favor. In dealing with the objection: "The Poor Souls are above us, like the Saints; but the former do not pray for us, so neither do the Saints" (*S. Th.*, 2a 2ae, qu. 83, a. 11), the Angelic Doctor refutes only the deduction, not the premise. From the fact that the Poor Souls do not pray for us, he says, it can not be inferred that the saints do not pray for us either, because they [the Poor Souls] are in an altogether different state, and even though they are above us on account of their freedom from sin, they are below us on account of their penal suffering: "*et secundum hoc non sunt in statu orandi, sed magis ut oretur pro eis.*" This argument, it is true, presupposes that the Poor Souls do not pray for us. But St. Thomas does

not examine this statement here; he merely touches upon it in passing. In another passage he admits that the departed sympathize with the lot of their friends on earth, even though they have no detailed knowledge of them, just as we intercede for them although we do not know their exact condition in the beyond. (*S. Th.*, 1a, qu. 89, a. 8).

Suarez and Bellarmine, who closely studied this question, arrived at the conclusion that the Poor Souls can and do pray for the living. Most modern theologians agree with them. The reasons are convincing. Charity towards others can not have ceased in these souls at their entrance into Purgatory, nor can it have been condemned to complete impotence and silence. Their own penal state does not necessarily prevent them from lending assistance to others. The Poor Souls enjoy divine grace and are God's friends, and hence their intercession is pleasing to Him and certain to be heard, because and in as far as they correspond with the divine plan of salvation.

Another question presents itself here: Have the Poor Souls in Purgatory that knowledge of our circumstances and necessities which seems to be a necessary condition for effective help? They do not, like the Saints, participate in the vision and knowledge of God. But, on the other hand, they are disembodied spirits whom we must not imagine as being hermetically locked up or secluded. St. Augustine says: "*Possunt spiritus mortuorum aliqua, quae hic aguntur, quae necessarium est eos nosse, non solum praesentia, sed etiam praeterita*

et futura, spiritu Dei revelante cognoscere."[1] They can, moreover, gain knowledge from the Saints, with whom they converse, from their Guardian Angels, and from new arrivals in Purgatory. That the angels have access to Purgatory may be assumed as certain. It is inconceivable that they should no longer be solicitous about their protegés, or that Purgatory should be closed against them. "Physicians and priests are admitted even to the worst criminals." (Gutberlet).

But why does the Church in her liturgical prayers turn to the Saints in Heaven, and not to the souls in Purgatory, for their intercession? The Saints, who no longer need help and prayers for themselves, but are happy in God and gloriously reign with Christ, are our principal helpers and intercessors. The Poor Souls are still in need of help. Their intercession resembles the prayers which the faithful on earth offer for one another. The Church has embodied neither the mutual prayers of her children on earth nor the prayers addressed to the Poor Souls into her liturgy, but leaves them to private devotion. It is remarkable, however, that the early Christians, as can be seen from invocations on ancient monuments, called upon the departed for their intercession.[2]

St. Catherine of Bologna testifies: "Whenever I am eager to obtain a certain grace, I appeal to these suffering souls to present my prayers to our common Father, and, as a rule, I feel that I owe the granting of my petition to their intercession." The Bl. Curé of Ars used to say:

[1] *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda.*

[2] J. P. Kirsch (tr. by J. R. McKee), *The Communion of Saints*, pp. 58 sqq.

"Oh, if all of us but knew what a wonderful influence these Holy Souls have over the heart of God, and what graces we can obtain through their intercession, they would not be so utterly forgotten; we must pray much for them, so that they may pray for us."

Confidence in the Poor Souls and the practice of invoking them in special needs is deeply rooted in the hearts of our Catholic people. We should not prevent, but promote this practice. We should, according to a decree of a provincial council of Vienna (1858), teach the people that the Poor Souls, even while still in Purgatory, are able to help and benefit us by their intercession. The fruit of this faith and practice is a valuable and blessed exchange of mutual giving and taking between these Holy Souls and ourselves.

Chapter XIII

MOTIVES FOR HELPING THE POOR SOULS

Why should we help the Poor Souls? This question is a very important one from the standpoint of homiletics. On the answer to it depends the practical success of our sermons. The motives must be explained to the intellect, recommended to the heart, and finally applied to the will as a lever, so that reason may become power, motives may become incentives, and our relations to the Poor Souls become active and energetic.

We may distinguish three orders or kinds of motives, which, however, need not all be expounded in every sermon.

1. The first motive for helping the Poor Souls arises from their need and their relation to us. This motive is compassion, sympathy, love, which can be awakened by a dignified, warm-hearted description of their sufferings and distress and by showing that we must not remain indifferent towards these souls, so severely tormented and condemned to inactivity, because the commandment of love does not stop at the gates of Purgatory, but embraces its inhabitants, who are our brothers and sisters in Christ and the Church, united with us by the bonds of charity and grace.

A most powerful incentive is the thought that probably many of those souls, when still on earth, were closely united with us by blood relationship or other ties. They are our parents, brothers, and sisters, our

relatives, friends, and benefactors. Of those who forget the Holy Souls in Purgatory the word of the Apostle is true: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. V, 8). He who refuses to help his own in Purgatory because he believes that he cannot help them, denies his Catholic faith; if he believes but does not help, he denies human feeling, and in so far is worse than an infidel.

To keep alive or to arouse Christian and human sentiments, to ward off the awful power of forgetfulness, we must remind the faithful of our debt to the departed, of their last hours, and of the pain and sorrow experienced at parting. Sentimentality and whimpering exaggerations ought, however, to be avoided. It can not be our purpose merely to draw tears of longing, but we must elicit and foster in the heart that yearning love which springs from generosity and loyalty and is merged in a strong desire of remaining in contact with the departed, of doing them good and showing them gratitude.

We must not be afraid to give this motive a strong thrust, so that it will pierce the hearers' conscience. We must drive home the fact that the duty of the living towards the dead is one not only of love and gratitude, but of justice and restitution, at least in the case of those who must admit that they have not fulfilled their duties towards parents, children, relatives and others, but have refused them due love, have embittered their lives, or have seduced them to sin. For such the duty of remembering the Poor Souls is greatly aggravated.

Refined natures sometimes suffer keenly from the fear that they gave too scanty a measure of love, gratitude, and care to those now departed. Death first showed how dearly they loved them, and what they could or should have done for them. This thought will lose much of its bitterness when it becomes a motive of greater solicitude for the Poor Souls. How such a sad heart will rejoice when it learns that it is not too late to make amends for neglected kindness and unrequited love, or to repair the offense or scandal given!

Considering the needs of the Poor Souls, their worthiness, the certainty of success, and the peculiar quality of the charity shown them, which is exempt from all impure alloy, the assistance given to the Poor Souls is a charitable work of most eminent, intrinsic goodness and of highest value. It is a veritable combination of all the "works of mercy," as St. Francis de Sales points out. "Is it not visiting the sick," he says, "when we alleviate the torments of Purgatory by our prayers? Do we not administer a refreshing draught to the souls thirsting in the burning flames for the beatific vision of God when we grant them a share in the dew of our prayers? Do we not feed the hungry when we hasten their liberation by all the means furnished us by our faith? Do we not redeem captives by freeing these souls from the prison of Purgatory? Do we not clothe the naked when we procure for them the shining garment of glory? Is it not an excellent way of practicing hospitality, when we cause them to be received into the heavenly Jerusalem and to be made citizens of the city of God? Is it not a far more precious service of love to

introduce a soul into Heaven than to shroud a corpse and conduct it to the grave?"

Some have gone even farther than this and attempted to weigh works done for the Poor Souls against other works of charity. This comparison ought to be avoided by the preacher. It is questionable to assume, as St. Bernardine does, that one who aids the Poor Souls, gains more merits for Heaven than one who does ten times more for the living, because the misery of the Poor Souls is far more distressing than the necessities of the living; or to argue with Bourdaloue (following Peter of Blois), that the liberation of the Poor Souls is more meritorious than the conversion of the heathen, because the former are holy and chosen souls, more valuable in the eyes of God than the latter. There once arose a controversy, alluded to in many devotional books, between two Dominican Friars, Bertrand and Benedict, as to whether it is more useful to labor for the conversion of sinners or for the redemption of the Poor Souls. Such comparisons are unwise, for they might eventually paralyze zeal for other works of mercy that are just as necessary as praying for the Poor Souls. Let us cling to the maxim: Do the one and neglect not the other. This much, of course, may and must be emphasized: that the suffrages offered for the Poor Souls are a real, true, and eminent work of Christian charity.

2. The second motive is even nobler, namely, that to make intercession for the Poor Souls is not only a work of neighborly love, but also of divine charity. Here not only the needs of our fellowmen, but the very highest in-

terests are involved, namely, the honor, the will, and the kingdom of God. Consequently our suffrages are an act of religious worship in the fullest sense of the word. We correspond with the will of God; we advance His honor and coöperate in perfecting His kingdom when we make use of the power granted us by His goodness; we espouse the cause of the Poor Souls and pay their debts by our intercession and satisfaction in order to hasten their entrance into heaven, to lead them to God, to augment the choirs of the blessed, and to multiply the praise of God in heaven.

Through God's mercy we enjoy a wonderful privilege: we can do our Saviour a favor, we can do something that He, directly, cannot do, because His love has, as it were, exhausted itself for these souls. Authorized by Him, we can gain for these souls a share in the treasures of the redemption, especially in the sacrifice of the redemption. We can speed their union with Christ, which both He and they desire. No doubt His word, "Whatsoever you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done it to me" (Matth. XXV, 40) applies here, and His promise will be fulfilled: "He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive the reward of a prophet: and he that receives a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man; and whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Matth. X, 41 sq.).

Finally we are engaged in the service of the Holy Ghost when by our mediation we enable these souls to

share in His consolations, when we cause them, who are sanctified by Him, to be cleansed from the last remnants of sin and led towards perfection. Therefore the Poor Souls can well say: "*Dominus retribuet pro me*" (Ps. CXXXVII, 8). God will not leave unrewarded what is done for them, for His glory, in His name, and according to His will. And if "there is joy in heaven over every sinner doing penance" (Luke XV, 7), there will assuredly be joy among the angels and saints over every soul freed from Purgatory, and over our own merciful intercession for their redemption.

3. The third, ethically lower, but entirely permissible and practically efficient motive is our own advantage. It is hard to tell whether the Poor Souls or ourselves draw greater benefit from the prayers we offer for them. It is a very tender thought of St. Bernardine that the Poor Souls, happy as they are over the help given them, rejoice even more over the spiritual advantages and gains accruing to the living from the good works done for the dead.

It will be well to remember what we said in the beginning of this essay on the moral and educational influence which converse with the Poor Souls exerts upon our religious life and our faith. What we do for them ennobles the heart, refines the conscience and the moral sense, is a splendid insurance against Purgatory, and will shorten our own sojourn there.

If it sometimes seems that our assistance to the Poor Souls is rendered at our own expense and that by applying the fruits of our holy Masses and indulgences, we impoverish ourselves, let us remember that this loss is

outweighed by the reward which God is sure to bestow for such an eminent work of Christian charity.

The Poor Souls themselves will also repay us for what we do for them, not only later on in Heaven, but even now, while still detained in Purgatory. There is no danger that they will forget the favors bestowed on them like the cup-bearer of Pharao; but we may say to them with confidence: "Remember me, when it shall be well with thee, and do me this kindness .... to take me out of prison." (Gen. XL, 14). Forgetfulness and ingratitude have no place in Purgatory, and even less in Heaven, where the word of our Lord will come true that the friends whom we have made on earth will receive us into the everlasting dwellings (Luke XVI, 9). Even now, in Purgatory, they accompany and surround us with their prayers, and later on in Heaven will be our powerful protectors and advocates.

Chapter XIV

WAYS AND MEANS OF HELPING THE POOR SOULS

Genuine Catholic mourning for the dead reaches into the world beyond. The mourner is not entirely taken up with the funeral, though, of course, he does not neglect it; nor with procuring flowers and wreaths, or with exterior demonstrations of sorrow, which, according to St. Augustine, are rather "*solatia vivorum quam subsidia mortuorum,*" and of which St. Bernard in his funeral sermon on Brother Gerard says: "*Videmus quotidie mortuos plangere mortuos suos, fletum multum, fructum nullum, et vere plorandi, qui ita plorant.*" Bourdaloue strongly inveighs against excessive mourning.

Real sorrow, on the contrary, is characterized by the impulse of turning grief into energy, feeling into action, sentiments and memories into deeds, love into help, plaints into prayers, and tears into "*lacrimas stipendiarias, lacrimas redemptrices*" (St. Ambrose). The sorrowing Catholic knows that faith without works is dead, and that a love which manifests itself only in sweet sentiments, pious wishes, and tears, in the opinion of St. James (II, 15 sqq.) is worthless.

But what gifts and works are to be considered here? According to the teaching and practice of the ancient Church they are primarily: the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, and alms; later fasting was added. The Council of Florence names the three first, but adds: "*et*

alia pietatis officia." St. Thomas also enumerates those three as "*praecipua officia*" and adds: "*quamvis quaecunque alia bona, quae ex caritate fiunt pro defunctis, eis valere credenda sunt.*" (*Suppl.*, qu. 71, a. 9). The Tridentine Council (Sess. XXV, *De Purgatorio*) defines as "*suffragia fidelium vivorum: missarum sacrificia, orationes, eleemosynae aliaque pietatis opera.*" St. Athanasius draws a beautiful comparison. "When the vineyards are in full bloom," he says, "even the wine in the cellar feels the aroma exhaled by the vines and begins, as it were, to blossom afresh; so also the Souls in Purgatory experience the influence of the good works that blossom in the garden of the Church." [1] Charity applies to these Holy Souls a share of all the good works of the living, and the love of the dead, in turn, becomes a strong motive for doing more good.

A more detailed explanation of the different ways and means by which we can help the Poor Souls is imperative in sermons, and we shall therefore give some hints:

1. The holy sacrifice of the Mass in its essence and according to the will of Christ, is a sacrifice of propitiation and satisfaction "*in remissionem peccatorum,*" which cancels venial sins and temporal punishments directly "*ex opere operato,*" though in a measure dependently on the disposition of the beneficiary. Its atoning power is not restricted to the living. The priest at his ordination receives the faculty "*missas celebrare tam pro vivis quam pro defunctis.*" From the beginning the Church was ever solicitous to give the Poor Souls their

[1] *Quaest. ad Antiochum*, qu. 34.

share in the fruits and effects of the Mass. As Christ Himself, after His death on the Cross, immediately descended into Limbo, thus the Church, after consecrating the Eucharistic Sacrifice, descends to the Poor Souls to draw them within the circle of its blessings. [2]

From the beginning, however, the Church did not restrict herself to a memento for the dead during the Eucharistic celebration, but offered the holy sacrifice for them in a particular manner, especially in connection with the burial rite. The Gelasian Sacramentary contains thirteen formulas of Masses for the dead, amongst them a *"Missa in depositione defuncti; diei tertii, septimi, tricesimi et annualis."* St. Augustine testifies that the sacrifice of redemption was offered for his mother, Monica, even before her corpse, which had been placed beside the grave, was deposited therein according to custom. (*Conf.*, IX, 12, cfr. c. XIII). The same may be observed in the report of St. Paulinus on the funeral of St. Ambrose.

For the Poor Souls, holy Mass is the fountain of Siloe, which brings health and refreshment; but they can reach it only with the help of the living. Lest they have a reason to complain, like the man sick of the palsy for thirty years, *"hominem non habeo"* (John V, 7), the Church and the faithful were from the earliest ages solicitous and anxious to secure for the Poor Souls a participation in the Holy Sacrifice. This can be done in different ways and in a different measure.

These souls participate in every Mass by the *Memento mortuorum,* which is found in the oldest liturgies in a

[2] Cfr. St. Augustine, *De Cura pro Mort.*, c. I; St. Chrysostom, *Hom. III in Phil.*; St. Cyril, *Cat. Myst.*, V, n. 6.

prominent place after the completion of the sacrificial action. The priest, his eyes resting on the Divine Victim before him on the altar, must recite the "*Memento*" according to the rubrics. It is both a particular intercession for some individual soul and a general remembrance of all, so that, as St. Augustine (*De Cura pro Mort.*) points out, even the poorest soul, which has neither parents nor children, neither relatives nor friends, is remembered by the one loving mother of all, the Church. "There is no doubt," he says, "that the departed receive help through the prayers of holy Church and the wholesome sacrifice; for it has been handed down by the Fathers and is observed in the whole Church, that during the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ prayers are offered for those who have died in her communion." (*Serm.*, 172, n. 2). We see from this and from the above quoted words of St. Cyril and St. Chrysostom that the Memento for the dead, so closely connected with the sacrifice and, as it were, immersed into the sacrificial Blood, was always considered to be very efficacious.

However, we can not only remember the Poor Souls at Mass, but the holy sacrifice may be offered *for* them, by the celebrant applying to them the *fructus medius* (*ministerialis*). Thus, the satisfactory fruits of the Mass become the share of the Poor Souls *modo solutionis.* The requiem Mass moreover contributes additional fruits of supplication, because the intercessory parts of this Mass refer in a special way to Purgatory.

Thus the faithful can aid the departed by means of the Mass in different ways: first by *assisting at Mass* and making an earnest Memento for them after Consecration; second, by *hearing Mass FOR them,* that is, direc-

ting their chief intention to them and thus applying to them, not indeed the meritorious, but the propitiatory and deprecatory fruits of the Mass; finally, by *having Mass offered FOR them.* The latter way, which is the best and most efficacious assistance that can be given to the dead, is very dear to our Catholic people and induces them to found annual Masses and to offer manual stipends.

There is another way of increasing the share of the Poor Souls in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, namely, by *offering up holy Communion for them.* Inability to receive the Bread of Life is perhaps one of the most painful privations in Purgatory, and there is no doubt that the charity of the faithful may, to a certain extent, supply this want by applying to the Poor Souls the fruits of holy Communion, as far as they are communicable. This practice, fostered by the Eucharistic movement of our days, deserves our fullest support and has nothing in common with the practice of placing a consecrated Host in the mouth or on the breast of a corpse,—an abuse which existed in the western and eastern Churches from about the fourth to the seventh century.[8]

2. From the earliest days of Christianity prayer was undoubtedly considered the proper language in conversing with the departed and a means, everywhere and always at everyone's disposal, of assisting them. What Tertullian says of a Christian widow: "*pro anima eius* [her departed husband] *orat et refrigerium interim ei adpostulat et in prima resurrectione consortium*" (*De Monog.*, c. 10), was done by every Christian for those members of his familly who had passed away. Besides

[8] F. X. Kraus, *Realenzyklopädie*, II, 885.

the Church always taught and practiced general intercession for all the Poor Souls, not only on certain days or at stated times, but as an element of her daily religious life Prayers for the dead are entwined into every *"hora,"* into every sacrifice, into every service.

It is also an ancient Christian practice to invoke the intercession of the Saints on behalf of the Poor Souls (cfr. St. Chrysostom, quoted above, and the inscriptions in the Catacombs).[4] In the Masses of the dead, in the closing orations of the Litany of All Saints, and in other prayers, the Church petitions God to grant eternal rest to the Poor Souls through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.

In one respect, however, the saints cannot do as much for the Poor Souls as the faithful on earth, because, like the Poor Souls themselves, they can no longer gain any merits nor make satisfaction; but, on the other hand, their intercession is far more powerful than ours. Whether they can apply it directly to the Poor Souls, or whether, as some think, the intercession of the Saints must be effected and transmitted through the living, is an open question.

It may be assumed as certain that the motherly heart of the Blessed Virgin, the *Mater Dolorosa,* beats for her children in Purgatory;—just as that the latter remain attached to her with childlike love. *Nemo tam mater!* A mother's heart has always an extra measure of love for her suffering children. The Saints speak of this frequently. Thus St. Vincent Ferrer says: "Mary is good, gracious, and merciful towards the suffering

[4] Kirsch, *Die Akklamationen,* etc., 37 sqq.; IDEM, *The Doctrine of the Communion of Saints,* pp. 203 sqq.

souls in Purgatory; through her they receive the greatest mitigation of their pains." St. Bernardine: "*In regno purgatorii dominium habet.*" In the revelations of St. Brigid Mary says: "I am the Mother of all who are in Purgatory; all the pains they suffer are relieved by my intercession." (Bk. IV, ch. 1).

3. From the Patristic passages which we have quoted before it is evident that almsgiving was customary at an early period as a means of bringing relief not only to the living, but also to the Poor Souls. Feeding the poor at funerals and anniversaries of the dead is an ancient Christian usage which survives in Mass foundations accompanied by distributions of alms. According to St. Thomas, almsgiving has an even greater power than prayer: "*Eleemosyna habet rationem sacrificii.*" In particular it would seem proper, for instance in cases of large estates, to restore a certain amount to the testator by giving alms to the poor.

4. Besides almsgiving, fasting and other penitential works, such as self-denial and mortification, patience in suffering and trials, in short, all good works are apt to be coined into a spiritual ransom for the Poor Souls by Charity. The meritorious fruits (increase of grace and merit, strengthening in virtue) belong to the one who does the good work; the satisfactory value, the atoning power, is ceded to the Poor Souls. Here, too, generous love constitutes a mighty motive.

An unusual degree of zeal is evidenced by the so-called "Heroic Act of Charity for the Poor Souls," which was spread by Father Olidan of the Theatine Order in the beginning of the 18th century, approved by Benedict XIII (1728), by Pius VI (1788), and by Pius IX (1852),

and enriched by many indulgences and privileges. The purpose of this act is to offer all satisfactory works voluntarily to God through the hands of the Blessed Virgin in favor of the Poor Souls. With regard to this act we may well say: *Qui capere potest capiat.*[5]

Finally aid and redemption can be brought to the Poor Souls by means of indulgences. St. Thomas says: "There is no reason why the Church should not be able to apply to the departed the common and general merits upon which indulgences are based." [6] The exact time when the Church began to exercise this power can not be definitely ascertained. It was commonly assumed that Pope Paschal I was the first to grant an indulgence in favor of the dead, in 817. The recent researches of Professor N. Paulus, however, seem to justify the opinion that the granting of indulgences to the souls in Purgatory can not be proved before the close of the Middle Ages. The first historically certain grant of this kind seems to be the Bulla de Cruzada of Pope Calixtus III, in 1457.

Application of the overflowing treasury of the merits of Jesus Christ and the Saints can be made to the Poor Souls only by special authorization of the Church; for she is the administratrix of the *"thesaurus Ecclesiae."* Indulgences in favor of the dead are not granted in the same manner as in favor of the living. The Church directly absolves the living from their sins and punishments by her power of jurisdiction; but she no longer exercises jurisdiction and therefore can not pronounce sentence over the dead. She may, by mediation of the living who perform the good work, offer to God the pay-

[5] Beringer, *Die Ablässe*, 11th ed., 318 sqq.
[6] *Suppl.*, qu. 9, a. 71, n. 10.

ment of their debt from her treasury. "Thus, for instance, a king may offer from his treasury payment to another king for an unfortunate subject who has committed a crime, and he may request the acceptance of the proffered ransom, and thus free him from prison, but he can not acquit him by a judicial sentence."[1] Hence the saying: Indulgences are applied to the Poor Souls, not *"per modum iurisdictionis,"* but *"per modum suffragii et solutionis;"* the Church intervenes for these souls not only by praying for them, but also by offering payment on their behalf.

Thus the living Christian does not transfer his indulgence to the Poor Souls, but merely posits the conditions necessary to make effective the intention of the Church which is directed towards the Poor Souls. This intention, as a rule, will find favor with God; but whether a plenary indulgence always results in the immediate liberation of a soul from Purgatory, or whether a partial indulgence always effects just so much partial remission, or is always applied to the particular soul for which it is intended: all this depends first on God's justice, mercy, and wisdom, and secondly on the disposition of the soul in question. This uncertainty, however, cannot diminish our confidence in the efficacy of indulgences, but will rather make us more zealous in applying them to the Poor Souls.

[1] Beringer, *Die Ablässe*, 44.

Chapter XV

PREACHING ON THE POOR SOULS

No priest who has deeply meditated on Purgatory, its dogmatic foundations and its ultimate practical consequences, and who himself fosters close intimacy with the Poor Souls, will deny that this dogma imposes upon him a serious and important duty, which must be complied with above all on All Souls' Day. Every year on November 2nd this duty will press heavily upon him, his preparation of the sermon for that day will become more careful, and his pleading for the suffering souls more insistent.

How much can be accomplished by a good use of that day and of the month of All Souls! The people are with you heart and soul! There is no heart that would shut itself against the words of the preacher or would refuse to take part in the journey to Purgatory. When, in the days of late autumn, with nature in her melancholy mood, the jubilation of All Saints abruptly changes into the wailing of All Souls, when all, even the less devout, direct their steps towards the cemetery and halt at the graves, from which so many painful memories arise, then indeed one feels how the soul of the people, stirred to its very depths, is diverted from earthly desires and worldly thoughts and, terrified by the consideration of death, approaches the Poor Souls and is easily moved to pity and assistance. In many places, the octave of All Souls' Day, or the whole month of November, is by ancient custom a time for the general reception of

the Sacraments, and all who can do so, procure for their departed the special privilege of a holy Mass.

All Souls' Day had a remarkable analogue in the pagan "*Parentalia,*" which the early Christians soon transformed into a day of commemoration for the dead. This day was frequently kept in the monasteries after the year 700, and, about 850, Amalarius of Metz, a priest, labored for its general introduction. At the beginning of the 11th century Abbot St. Odilo, "the most merciful man of his time," made the second day of November a day for commemorating the Holy Souls, introducing this "pious invention," as he called it, into all the monasteries affiliated with Clugny. Soon afterwards the observance of All Souls' Day became general throughout the Church.[1] Now it is one of the most popular festivals of the whole ecclesiastical year, and has obtained such power over the minds and hearts of the people that even non-Catholics are sometimes moved to keep it in their own way.

Rarely will the priest find his congregation better disposed than on this day. Should it tax his strength too much to preach twice on All Saints' Day, as is the custom in many places, let him shorten or even omit the sermon in the morning rather than the one on the Poor Souls in the afternoon. He should not, however, be satisfied with this one sermon, but especially during the month of November, at the conclusion of every sermon, have the bell rung for the Poor Souls. Thus he will not only benefit the Poor Souls, but also his parish. Daily attendance at Mass and more frequent reception of the Sacraments, accompanied by continual intercourse with

[1] Kraus, *Realenzyklopädie,* II, 884.

the departed souls, is like a mission and may put an end to many scandals, especially dissensions and enmities, and, in short, awaken all good spirits and powers in a parish.

But should the Holy Souls after the close of the month be made to wait a whole year before the priest, their official advocate, again says a word for them in the pulpit? This is certainly not the intention of the Church. She has woven the Memento of the dead into the entire ecclesiastical year. There is no sacrifice, no hour of the priestly office, no festival on which she forgets her dead. She considers them as still belonging to her family and consequently admits them to all her joys, prayers, cares, and graces. Thus good and pious Christians continue to live with the souls of their departed as if they were invisible members of the family.

The priest, too, should remain in constant communication with the Poor Souls and mention them often in his sermons. The good and zealous members of his flock expect this of him and will feel pleased; the less zealous need the reminder, lest, in the bustle of this world, they entirely lose sight of the world beyond.

It would surely not be too much if another principal sermon in the course of the year were devoted to the Poor Souls. More important, however, than the multiplication of sermons on the Poor Souls is that they be frequently commemorated in the ordinary Sunday and holyday sermons and recommended to the pious prayers of the faithful, not in appendix-like or stereotyped phrases, but with strong exhortations drawn from the chief topic of the sermon.

A *Memento mortuorum* can be easily and organically added to almost any topic or Gospel. Such topics as vicarious satisfaction, penance, punishment of sin, use of the means of grace, frequentation of the Sacraments, Sacrifice of the Mass, the last things, restitution, intercessory prayer, almsgiving, good works, indulgences, frequently recur. Many Gospels can be applied to the Poor Souls. There is, *e. g.*, the healing of the leper on the third Sunday after Epiphany. To us is given the power of saying to the souls in Purgatory in the name of Jesus: "*Volo mundare.*" There is the cockle in the wheat, ordered to be burned (in connection with 1 Cor. 3, 15: ...."so as by fire"); there is the miracle of the loaves and fishes: "gather up the fragments that remain": from our abundance of spiritual graces and treasures we should give freely to the Poor Souls. On the third Sunday after Easter: the little while, their sadness changing into joy at seeing the Saviour again. On the second after Pentecost: the banquet, so many times missed and neglected in life, to which we can lead these souls. On the third after Pentecost: the joy in Heaven over one sinner doing penance; so also the joy of the angels and saints over souls that, cleansed from the last remnants of sin, enter the blessed company of the Saints. On the fourth Sunday after Pentecost: the rich draught of fishes: "we labored all night and have taken nothing"; the night in which no man can work; to care for the Poor Souls also means to be "fishers of men." On the fifth after Pentecost: perfect justice. On the eighth after Pentecost: "Give an account of thy stewardship": small defects, too, exclude from Heaven until atoned for; "make friends

unto you of the mammon of iniquity," etc. On the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost: the good Samaritan: even from the other world we are called upon to do likewise. On the seventh after Pentecost: the law of loving our neighbor also comprises the Poor Souls, to pray for them is both a demand and a proof of charity, and so forth.

It is even more important that the Poor Souls should not be forgotten during the various sacred seasons, and especially on the highest feasts with their intensified religious activity and their flood of graces. It is not even necessary to construct connections artificially as it were; there are so many natural ones that we rather wonder why they have been so seldom used.

To begin with the season of Advent. Is not Purgatory, so to say, a permanent Advent? Are not the Poor Souls veritable "Adventists"? Do not cries and sighs arise out of Purgatory more pitiful and urgent than those of the Prophets and the just men of old? Is not "O" the regular antiphon there? And are not these souls good teachers and models of desire who long for salvation and for the coming of the Redeemer? Grant them a hearing and say a word in their favor also in your Advent sermons!

On "Christmas in Purgatory" Bishop Prohàska says: "In the world beyond Christmas is celebrated in a more serious and intensive manner than on earth. There it is not so much the feast of bright, sweet joy, as the day which makes the holy souls particularly conscious of the great ends of the Incarnation. The Christmas antiphons in Purgatory do not, perhaps, announce that the heavens have become '*melliflui,*' but

they express all the more ardently longing for the glory of God and for peace to men in the depths of that realm where suffering souls are awaiting the coming of the Lord, agitated above all by the question: 'Did Christ gain the object of His coming into the world? Did He gain it with us?' The answer bears on them like a heavy weight, for they clearly perceive that the purpose of His Incarnation is not yet attained in them, and the glory of God, shining so brightly on high, has not yet penetrated to the depths of Purgatory. Here, instead of brightness, there is shadow; instead of refined gold, dross. Here, the programme of Christmas is not yet carried out, glory as well as peace exist only in desire, and reveal themselves only in prayer, in earnest realization of the duty to be purged from sin .... The cry 'Peace to men' finds a strange echo in Purgatory, mingled with much wailing and lamentation, of which the Apostle writes: 'We know that every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain, even till now' (Rom. VIII, 22). The Poor Souls feel the earth trembling under the heavy burden of sin, they hear all creation wail because of man's guilt, and realize that the world suffers under the servitude of sin and longs to be freed from the yoke of evil. The world of Purgatory is, as it were, 'travailing in pain,' yearning for a new, a never ending life ..... The Christmas hymns stir up in the souls in Purgatory a holy but violent homesickness. *Their* Christmas hymn is a spirited but patient prayer of hope, for they expect from the grace of Christ their liberation, their adoption as sons of God.''

Add to this consideration another. Perhaps on no other day, except All Souls' Day and the anniversary of a

death, are the gaps torn by death in a family, the missing of a mother or father, the loss of a child or consort, so keenly felt and realized, and at no other time do the wounds of the heart bleed so profusely as in the Holy Night and during the Christmas season. While Christian charity urges men to gladden the hearts of others by gifts, and to extend the circle of beneficence as widely as possible, certainly those Holy Souls who were lately, yea are even now, members of the family, at least of the great family of God, namely, the worthy and grateful sufferers in Purgatory, should not be forgotten.

The difficulty of arousing a proper spirit of penance and mortification in Lent seems to grow continually. Our faint-hearted effeminate generation is unwilling to take upon itself anything that reminds it of fasting, of self-imposed moderation in eating and drinking, of abstinence from amusements and comforts. It is, therefore, salutary to remind the faithful how little is really demanded of them, how easy penance is made, how slight is the pain of self-denial when compared with the long and severe sufferings of Purgatory, even for venial sins, and how, by fasting and other works of mortification, we can benefit not only our own soul, but also the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

Induced by such considerations the Syrians have arranged for three days of prayer for the Poor Souls during the season immediately preceding Lent, namely, the Friday before Quinquagesima for the souls of those who died away from home in a foreign country. The Friday before Septuagesima for the departed priests. The Armenians celebrate All Souls' Day on Easter Mon-

day. Good Friday and Easter assuredly are highly important days also for the Suffering Church; as Jesus, after His death, descended into the realm of the dead and showed us the path leading thither: so also the Church and every Christian can procure for the Poor Souls a share in the sacrifice of the Cross and the glory of the Resurrection.

"I consider the Ascension of our Lord to be the principal feast of Purgatory," says Bishop Prohaska. "The world of purification is built entirely in a style towering heavenwards, as its every thought, pain, and desire is an ascension. There unceasingly resound the words of the Psalmist: 'Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place' (Ps. XXIII, 3); and, incited to a new desire for eternal life, the throngs of souls yearn for Heaven. 'The chariot of the Lord is attended by ten thousand, and thousands of them shall rejoice: the Lord is among them in Sina, in the holy place' (Ps. LXVII, 18). Thousands of souls form the fiery wheels of God's chariot, and they have but one desire, namely, that the words of the same Psalm may come true: 'Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive' (Ps. LXVII, 19). When I meditate on the mysterious world of Purgatory, my soul, too, cries out to the Lord: 'Make them your captives, O Lord, and lead the precious prize on high into Thy kingdom.'" [2]

During the season of Pentecost the faithful will feel impelled to conduct the rays and streams of the consolation derived from the holy Ghost to the souls in Purgatory, who are so worthy and so greatly in need of consolation.

[2] *Der König, dem alle leben,* 84 sq.

On the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary we should not forget that the regions of Purgatory also belong to the dominion of the Queen of Heaven, and it should give us pleasure to assist in redeeming multitudes of souls so that they may celebrate the triumph of Mary in Heaven.

On feasts of a local character, such as the anniversary of the consecration of the parish church, or its patronal feast, a memento for those who once celebrated with us, but are now languishing in Purgatory, is certainly appropriate; the more so because by such a remembrance our joy becomes more serious and the spirit of worldlines, which is apt to prevail on such occasions, is more easily checked.

Thus the whole ecclesiastical year furnishes numerous opportunities for introducing the Poor Souls into the sermons and services and for dividing with them the fruits and graces of the ecclesiastical year, which they undoubtedly celebrate in their own way in Purgatory, as in an artificially prolonged *status viatoris,* although they can not draw directly from its fountains nor enjoy its fruits. For the priest himself such mementoes are very useful because they serve to secure greater success for his labors during the different seasons of the year. Similarly the impressions of missions and retreats are deepened and strengthened if the faithful, having been renewed in spirit, are led to the Poor Souls at the close of the exercises.

Deaths and funerals, where funeral sermons are customary, offer another opportunity to keep the faithful in touch with the Poor Souls. We would premise, however,

that an occasional sermon on the ecclesiastical burial rite and on the proper way to attend funerals would be useful every year or two. In connection with the instruction on the care of the sick and dying, we may show the people how to treat a corpse, coffin, and grave, inculcate reverence for the cemetery, and invite the faithful to visit the graves. Such instructions are necessary to preserve the influence of Christianity and the Church upon the last things of man, which are in danger of being re-paganized. The movement for the cremation of the dead, the tombstones and their inscriptions, the decorations in the cemeteries, the ever increasing speeches of laymen at funerals—all these things show whither we are drifting.

Wherever, according to ancient Christian custom, the funeral services are centered in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, where the corpse is escorted to the grave amid the prayers of the whole congregation, these beautiful customs should be maintained as a precious heirloom of Catholic culture. How cold and heartless is the recently introduced practice of intentionally putting away every religious thought, the profuse accumulation of flowers, the parading of societies, the meaningless trail of half empty carriages or motors and, as a closing ceremony, instead of prayer and holy water a clod of earth—or more recently a fir twig—thrown into the open grave! To such ceremonies may be applied what St. Augustine says: "*Pompa exsequiarum magis vivorum solatia, quam subsidia mortuorum.*" (*De Cura pro Mort.*).

How dignified and majestic, yet at the same time how consoling and affectionate is the way in which the Church treats her dead! She bends over the

bleeding wounds of the mourners' hearts with motherly care, visits the cold and indifferent with earnest reproach, confronts all with thoughts of eternity; reëstablishes and spiritualizes the relations just severed by death, and unites the living and the dead by bonds of mutual consolation, assistance, and coöperation. Many objections are advanced against funeral sermons. Yet the funeral sermon offers a most favorable opportunity to recall to the minds of men, especially those estranged from the Church, the power of faith and charity to conquer death, to plead for the Poor Souls, and to establish closer relations with them. If funeral sermons are restricted to such topics, to the exclusion of mere personalities, no sufficient reason can be advanced for discontinuing them where they are customary. It is true, the entire funeral rite of the Church points in the same direction; yet not so clearly as to render some words of explanation superfluous, especially where the Latin language is used in the burial rite.

The funeral sermon must of course, be prompted by charity, must be worded in such a manner as to exclude all but necessary personal remarks; must practice the "*aletheuein en agápe;*" must not pronounce any unauthorized and premature canonization, nor indulge in rash prophecies or soft and sentimental expressions, for all of which the soul of the departed would hardly be thankful. We should not say, for instance: "After such a life, work, and death we may assume as certain that the departed has already reached the goal and is admitted to eternal glory; if, however, he is retained in

Purgatory, let us not refuse him our prayers." We should not say: "Although we may confidently hope that he has already entered Heaven, still let us remember him in our prayers and sacrifices." With such feeble encouragement we shall not be able to elicit an energetic resolution to give continuous assistance to the dead. Such weakly expressions, on the contrary, involve cruelty towards the Poor Souls. We should not create the impression as if the frank statement that the departed is probably in Purgatory, injured his character or hurt the feelings of his relatives. Such a well founded and truly Christian admission will, on the contrary, put an end to all those apotheoses by which funeral sermons have been discredited and which are out of place even if they embody the preacher's honest conviction, because those who knew the departed more intimately may doubt the credibility of the preacher when they hear him affirming what they have good reasons to doubt.

Let us always adhere strictly to the doctrines of the faith, even when non-Catholics are present, illustrate these doctrines from Holy Scripture and the Fathers, and by simple deductions from reason and experience. While it is perfectly permissible to point out the good in the life of a man, and to praise his loyalty and courage in the profession and practice of his faith, respect for the truth demands that we remind our hearers that the soul of the departed, because of its imperfections and unpaid penalties of sin, has possibly, nay most probably, not yet entered Heaven, but according to the just and merciful decree of God has to suffer and atone, and it is, therefore, our duty and sweet privilege to lend him our assistance.

Chapter XVI

HOMILETIC DIRECTIONS

From the preceding exposition the following principles may be deduced:

1. The pressing duty and task of preaching for the Poor Souls can not be complied with by a single sermon on All Souls' Day and an occasional funeral sermon within the year. Not only in November, but all through the ecclesiastical year, especially during the great festival seasons, the voice of the Poor Souls should be made audible by a fervent "*Memento mortuorum*" woven organically into the sermon. The very remembrance of the dead is a valuable homiletic asset, and the care of the Poor Souls must always be a part of our pastoral work for the living.

2. Correct and solid dogmatical instruction on Purgatory is more than ever necessary. The homiletic directions and warnings of the Council of Trent also must be well heeded (*Decr. de Purg.*, Sess. 25; see above, page 13).

3. It is better to explain one biblical text in each sermon than to reproduce the entire biblical argument, which requires a complete course of sermons. The same is true of the proofs taken from tradition.

We have warned before against pressing the scriptural quotations and have given a correct exegetical explanation of them. Though the doctrine of Purgatory

is not expressly and unequivocally inculcated in Holy Scripture, yet belief in it is so clearly presupposed that the passages quoted could hardly be understood and explained satisfactorily without reference to Purgatory. By citing passages like Matth. XXV, 34, Luke XXIII, 43, Rom. VIII, 1-2, 2 Cor. V, 1, 10, Apoc. XIV, 13, some have attempted to construe a counter proof, but sane exegesis must pronounce it a failure. All these passages can be fully explained on the assumption of Purgatory and leave open the possibility of such a place.

The preacher, for the reason given above, must lay stress upon the Scriptural argument, and if he delivers a course of sermons on Purgatory, it would be quite proper to devote a complete sermon or even several to the teaching of the Bible. As a rule, however, it is not advisable to give all the quotations in one sermon. Merely to enumerate them would be of little use, and to develop each one in detail would prove tiresome and leave no time for the practical application. It will, therefore, be better to select one quotation at a time and explain it thoroughly, either from the apologetic point of view, which, however, need not be too much in evidence, or in its moral and practical bearings.

The proof from tradition offers a good opportunity to strengthen the faithful in the conviction that our present Catholic doctrine and practice is identical with that of the early Christians. It will be impressive to show that the dogma of Purgatory is found in the primitive Church and has been preserved throughout the centuries, theoretically as well as in its practical application,

It will be necessary to point out how historical truth is distorted by the Protestant assertion that the dogma of Purgatory was borrowed from paganism or that it is a superstition of a later period or an invention of Pope Gregory the Great.

But we would not deem it wise, except possibly in a course of sermons on Purgatory, to embody the whole traditional argument into one sermon. Such a protracted review of witnesses would have to be quite rhetorical to be interesting, besides taxing the preacher's as well the hearers' memory too severely. It is, however, desirable that a voice from the early Church be heard in every sermon on Purgatory, either in the doctrinal or in the practical part, because a word from the ancient Church always has a strengthening effect upon the faith.

4. The dogma of Purgatory ought to be demonstrated from reason and defended against objections; not in every sermon, however, nor before every audience. Too much argumentation might have the opposite effect. This caution is not superfluous. Let us not begin every sermon, least of all before a good faithful congregation, with a detailed proof of the existence of Purgatory The people would find this strange and would comment on it. To them belief in Purgatory is a religious reality woven into their very lives. They would become distrustful were we to come again and again with proofs for this dogma. Others again, whose faith is weak, might receive the impression that this dogma must be rather doubtful, since it needs such elaborate arguments. Some

words strengthening the faith ought to be offered in every sermon, as our time is infested with criticism and doubt, but not always in the form of argument or apology. Generally speaking, a clear and distinct exposition of the Catholic doctrine will of itself have an apologetical effect and should in every case precede the formal demonstration.

We must not forget that the best means of confirming the belief in Purgatory is a lively interchange of thoughts and prayers with the Poor Souls. The preacher will most effectively strengthen the faith of his hearers if he speaks from personal experience and shows himself to be well versed in the things pertaining to Purgatory. He will without tergiversation conduct even a doubting hearer thither and put him in touch with the Holy Souls. Bourdaloue in his monumental sermon on All Souls introduces the apologetical part in such a way that no unfavorable impression is created. He mentions three classes of Christians who neglect their duty towards the Poor Souls, namely, (1) those who do not believe in the sufferings of Purgatory; (2) those who believe in them, but are not moved to pity; and (3) those who are moved, but remain inactive. The first class offers him an opportunity to develop the arguments for and to refute the objections against the dogma.

5. To give a description of Purgatory is difficult, but it cannot be dispensed with in a forcible sermon. Onesidedness will make it untrue. To mention only the sufferings, or only the joys of the Poor Souls is not advisable. The description should always take

into account all the characteristic features of the life in Purgatory: the intermingling, the continual ebb and flow of joy and pain, torture and comfort, as shown above.

6. In order to produce a lasting and effective intimacy with the Poor Souls it is of the highest importance to present the possibility and efficacy of assistance as well as the motives for helping them so as to touch the heart and the will. But do not try to say everything in one sermon. Rather select one motive and one means of suffrage at a time and elucidate and recommend that one minutely and emphatically. Thus you will more effectively gain your object.

Chapter XVII

TEXTS AND SERMON SKETCHES

The number of Scriptural texts quoted in printed sermons on the Poor Souls is remarkably small. Two of them, namely, "It is a holy and wholesome thought . ." (2 Mach. XII, 46) and "Have pity on me at least you my friends . . . ." (Job XIX, 21) are of such frequent occurrence that one might rather wish to see them set aside for a season. However, it is not necessary to augment the number of Scriptural citations applicable to the Poor Souls by forced allegories. If we search Scripture for passages that can be applied to Purgatory, the apparent want will soon give way to abundance. Of course, we must be allowed to transfer to the Poor Souls expressions of grief, pain, and complaint, cries for help and aid that primarily are attributed to the living. By doing this, we merely follow the example of the Church herself, who has interwoven her entire office for the dead and the funeral liturgy with words taken from the Scriptures.

It is not surprising that she has above all laid the Psalms under contribution. St. Chrysostom remarks: "*In funeralibus defunctorum primus et medius et novissimus est David*" (*Hom. de Poenit.*). The Psalms, he says, unite the living with the dead (*Hom. de Stud. Praes.*, n. 1), *i. e.*, David with those who now sing these sacred hymns. Thus we may also say that the Psalms are the common property of the living and of the de-

parted souls in Purgatory, and belong to the Suffering Church as a prelude to glory (Greg. Naz., *Or.*, 40). They accompany earth's pilgrims through the trials of life, and remain with them as friends and comforters in Purgatory, until they are received into the eternal home.

Besides the Psalms, it is especially Job who appears in the ecclesiastical liturgy of the dead as choir leader of the Poor Souls,—Job, the majestic, universal representative of human misery, whose plaints resound also in that realm of pain. The same is true of the Lamentations of Jeremias and many other canticles of woe or consolation sung by the prophets. Nor is the New Testament devoid of passages directly or indirectly referring to the Poor Souls. Let us consider these first:

1. Amongst the dogmatical texts we have quoted from the New Testament 1 Cor. III, 15 is especially adapted for funeral sermons: "If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." In connection with this text we may ask the questions: Why is Purgatory? Who is there? What kind of a life do the Poor Souls lead? The painful side of this life is emphasized by the word "fire," the consoling side by the assurance, "he himself shall be saved."

There are also quite a number of utterances by our Saviour Himself that may be applied to Purgatory and the Poor Souls. "You indeed have sorrow now, but I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you" (John XVI, 22). Is this not like the farewell with which the Saviour dis-

misses each soul at the particular judgment? And does not this parting word constantly resound in the souls of those consigned to Purgatory—awakening in them now pain and longing, now solace and hope?

No one will find fault with Bourdaloue for taking as a text for his sermon on the Holy Souls John V, 25: "Amen, amen, I say unto you that the hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." To-day, he says, is the day and the hour, because the voice of the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ (*melius loquentis quam Abel*) is offered throughout the world and is heard in Purgatory; and those that hear it are saved.

The word of Jesus recorded in John IX, 4: "I must do the works of Him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh, in which no man can work," may be referred to the Poor Souls in so far as night has come for them; the passage also contains a practical application for the living (see the fourth sermon, *infra*, Part II).

The Saviour's exhortation to be merciful (Matth. V, 7 and Luke VI, 36) does not exclude, but rather includes, helpful pity for the Poor Souls, a work of charity that is urgently recommended in Luke XVI, 9: "Make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings," and by the promise (Matth. X, 42): "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of water only in the name of a disciple [that is because he is a disciple of Jesus] amen, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." By His assurance: "Amen, I say

to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matth. XXV, 40), Jesus moreover identifies Himself with those holy souls and accepts as done for Him whatever is done for them.

Besides 1 Cor. III, 15, we may also quote the following passage from the first Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians (iv.12) : "We will not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you be not sorrowful, even as others who have no hope." The dogma of Purgatory is a revelation which gives us the truth concerning the fate of our departed, prevents inconsolable mourning, and fills us with sweet hope for them and for us.

Well may we apply to the Poor Souls the glorious things St. Paul tells of all the members of the New Law in 2 Cor. III, 18: "We all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." The process of transformation and transfiguration, of which the Apostle speaks, is continued and completed in Purgatory. Applied to the Poor Souls, this text offers the beautiful thought that they who have seen the glory of the Lord face to face at the particular judgment, still bear the reflection of that glory and have no other desire than to become a pure and stainless reflection of the vision they have seen, and this desire is satisfied by the flames of Purgatory; here they proceed from brightness to brightness through the spirit of the Lord, who has kindled these flames and given them power to cleanse and transfigure souls.

St. Paul's appeal to the generosity of the Corinthians with its motives can be addressed to the faithful in favor of the Poor Souls: "In this present time, let your abundance supply their want, that their abundance also may supply your want" (2 Cor. VIII, 14). Abundance is the portion of the faithful on earth compared with that of the "Poor" Souls. All the graces of redemption are at their free disposal, and it costs but little to share them with the Poor Souls. On the other hand the Poor Souls are not *so* poor that they cannot be of some help to us even now; and when once they shall have entered Heaven, they will gladly share their abundance of joy with those to whom they owe gratitude.

The strong call for help in the Epistle to the Hebrews (XIII, 3): "*Memento vinctorum,*" will serve to remind the faithful of their duty towards the Poor Souls.

From the other Epistles we will quote St. James (V, 16): "Pray for one another, that you may be saved, for the continual prayer of the just man availeth much." This communion of prayer is not confined to the earth, nor does it cease with death; the power of prayer availeth much also beyond the grave; it opens prisons, it extinguishes flames, it mediates salvation and leads to beatitude.

Finally, there is 1 John I, 7: "If we walk in the light, as he also is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins." We may understand this "walking in the light" as faith (particularly faith in Purgatory), or as the state of grace; the fellowship is the *Communio*

Sanctorum, which embraces the Poor Souls, and makes possible the intercession of the living for them, by which intercession the Blood of Christ, which alone can cleanse souls from sin, is applied to them.

2. Passing on to the Psalms, we shall quote only a few, in order to show what a rich storehouse is open to us here. We shall pass over all those that are simply lamentations and calls for help that could be placed into the mouth of the Poor Souls. Of greater value seem to us those passages in which the sharp cries of pain and anguish are accompanied by a strain of joy and hope, thus giving an opportunity to depict the characteristic features of the life in Purgatory, which is, as was said before, a blending of joy and grief. Very serviceable are especially such passages as, when explained in the form of a homily, are apt to satisfy all the demands of a sermon on the Holy Souls. We cite a few.

Ps. LXV, 9-12: "Who has set my soul to live: and has not suffered my feet to be moved: for Thou, O God, hast proved us, Thou hast tried us by fire, as silver is tried, ... we have passed through fire and water, and Thou hast brought us out into refreshment." The sentence of the Judge assured the soul of life and freed it from the danger of stumbling; not, however, without probation and purification by fire; still its painful passage through flames and through a flood of sufferings is not without "refreshment," because the soul enjoys the blessed certainty of approaching redemption.

Ps. XLIII, 19 ff.: "And our heart has not turned back: neither hast Thou turned aside our steps from Thy

way; for Thou hast humbled us in the place of affliction, and the shadow of death has covered us." It was a critical moment for the soul when it appeared before the Judge. But is was able to sustain His glance and was not confounded; even though a temporary exile was decreed, the soul was not led away from Him forever, but towards Him. Thus, indeed, a great humiliation has come upon it; but it is consoled as it is not rejected by Him, but is on the way to Him. Let us be its faithful companions on that arduous way!

Ps. CXLV, 2, 7 ff.: "Praise the Lord, O my soul, in my life I will praise the Lord; .... the Lord looseth them that are fettered; the Lord enlighteneth the blind, the Lord lifteth up them that are cast down, the Lord loveth the just." This is one of the Psalms in the Vespers for the dead. The hymns of praise and gratitude chanted by the Saints are echoed in the depths by the souls whom the Lord loves and who love the Lord. Even now He offers them refreshment, through us. He will, in due time, strike their fetters from them and assume them into eternal light. What a beautiful coöperation between God and men for the salvation of souls! *Divinorum divinissimum cooperari Deo in salutem animarum.*

Ps. CII, 2 sqq.: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He has done for thee: Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, Who healeth all thy diseases: Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion, Who satisfieth thy desire with good things; thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's." This is the thanksgiving prayer of the Poor Souls. Their

present sufferings and tribulations do not shake their confidence, for they know that their sufferings are decreed with a most loving intention, namely, of cleansing them, of renewing their youth, and that wings will grow to them in this land of exile, enabling them to soar into eternal life.

Ps. XXXIX, the first Psalm in the 3rd Nocturn of the *Officium defunctorum,* contains the verses (2 to 5): "With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and He was attentive to me. And He heard my prayers, and brought me out of the pit of misery and the mire of dregs. And He put a new canticle into my mouth, a song to our God. Many shall see and shall fear: and they shall hope in the Lord." The soul relates how it fared after its departure from this world; how it was carried up with lightning speed to God by its own desire; how the Judge graciously placed it on the rock of certainty as to its salvation, but then sent it away into exile, and gave to it a new hymn to sing,—a hymn of praise, indeed, but of a peculiar kind, to be sung from a grateful heart, but amidst unspeakable woes and torments. The faithful Christians hear of its fate and are aroused to compassion, but also filled with the fear of God.

Verses 12 to 14 of the same Psalm: "Withhold not Thou, O Lord, Thy tender mercies from me: Thy mercy and Thy truth have always upheld me. For evils without number have surrounded me; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see. They are multiplied above the hairs of my head, ... be pleased, O

Lord, to deliver me, look down, O Lord, to help me." To these we may add verse 18: "I am a beggar and poor; the Lord is careful for me. Thou art my helper and protector: O my God, be not slack." Such vehement outbursts of grief, tempered by tender love and unshaken trust in God, who still is solicitous for the Poor Souls and has given power to the living to aid them, are certainly apt to serve for a description of Purgatory. Similar strains are found in Ps. XL, quoted in the same Nocturn, especially verse 2: "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day."

In Psalm XLI and XLII are found touching strains of homesickness and longing for heaven (*"quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontem aquarum"*) coupled with a hope painfully arising from depths of woe (*"quare tristis es anima mea?"*). These sentiments are certainly not alien to the Poor Souls; it is for us to console them lovingly: "Why so sad, Poor Soul?"

The mixture and coëxistence of joy and woe, of grief and solace, in the life of the Poor Souls is brought out in Ps. XCIII, 19: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul." This cry is addressed to God. It is an expression of gratitude for the fact that all the sufferings of Purgatory are interwoven with consolations; and an appeal to the faithful on earth for loyal, consoling tokens of sympathy.

Ps. CXIV begins the Vespers for the Dead. St. Ambrose based his funeral sermon for the Emperor Theodo-

sius on this Psalm. Applied to Purgatory, it offers an answer to the question: What are the Poor Souls doing? They love, suffer, pray, praise, and thank God—and they hope.

A veritable hymn of the Poor Souls is Ps. XXIX, with its mournful, yet ringing, notes which so beautifully depict the ebb and flow in the feelings of the Poor Souls. In the first verses the certainty of salvation is joyfully affirmed: "I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast upheld me and hast not made my enemies rejoice over me.. Thou hast brought forth, O Lord, my soul from hell: Thou hast saved me from them that go down into the pit." Verse 5 is an invitation to praise God: "Sing to the Lord, O ye saints, and give praise to the memory of His holiness." These souls are saints, in truth, and therefore worthy of joining in the thrice-holy "*De profundis*" of the elect. They do so joyfully, remembering the blessed moment when they were allowed to gaze for an instant into the Sun of divine holiness. Verses 7 and 8 describe how abruptly the happiness flowing from that gaze was turned into confusion: "Thou turnedst away Thy face from me, and I became troubled." The strains of this Psalm die away with expressions of sweet hope.

Ps. LXXVI, 3 sqq.: "My soul refused to be comforted: I remembered God and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit swooned away" is a short, but striking description of the discordant feelings wrestling for harmony in the Poor Soul.

The complaint of Psalm XXX, 13: "I am forgotten as one dead from the heart," may be justly attributed to many a Poor Soul, and the request: "Forget not to the end the souls of thy poor" (Ps. LXXIII, 19) may be directed to us as well as to God. They lament that "those who passed by have not said: The blessing of the Lord be upon you" (Ps. CXXVIII, 8); we walk across their graves and do not even say a "*Requiem aeternam.*" Compare also the lament, Ps. LXXXVII, 19: "Friend and neighbor Thou hast put far from me, and my acquaintance, because of misery." (Cfr. Job XIX, 14 sq., 19).

Ps. CXX, also quoted in the Vespers for the Dead, is a hymn of longing and confidence: "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountain, whence help shall come to me," to the mountains of the heavenly Jerusalem and to the holy hills on earth, namely, the altars. Verses 5 sqq. contain words of comfort and blessing addressed to the Poor Souls by the living. The "pastoral Psalm" (XXII, "*Dominus regit me*") seems to be too joyful to apply to Purgatory, yet verse 4: "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff have comforted me," is assuredly true of the Poor Souls, as they may through our help obtain a portion of the pasture of the Good Shepherd and sit down at the table of His grace.

To Purgatory may also be applied the beautiful words: "*Misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi; iustitia et pax osculatae sunt*" (Ps. LXXXIV, 11). The mercy and un-

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failing truth of God, to whom nothing remains hidden, and who keeps all His promises and threats, have called into existence Purgatory, as a realm in which justice is king, but also a queen whose scepter is not only respected but also loved and kissed, so that fullest peace prevails. All these souls move like stars in their courses, without interruption, without reluctance, in profound silence, but not yet in beatific peace. They call out to God while Ho purifies them that "Amen" which the elect pronounce while He glorifies them, and their life and being, too, is a hymn of praise and gratitude (*"quia misericordia Tua magna est super me et eruisti animam meam ex inferno inferiori"* (Ps. LXXXV, 13).

Ps. LXIV (*"Te decet"*), 5 sq.: "Blessed is he whom Thou hast chosen and taken to Thee; he shall dwell in Thy courts. He shall be filled with the good things of Thy house; holy is Thy temple, wonderful in justice. Hear us, O Lord, our Saviour, the hope of all the ends of the earth, and in the seas afar off." Blessed may the Poor Souls call themselves, for the eye of the Judge told them that they were chosen and found worthy of eternal beatitude, and that Heaven is secure. They were permitted to cast a glance into the heavenly tabernacles, but the glory and brightness blazing forth from thence showed them their faults and imperfections, and now all that remains to the wealthy heiress, as yet still poor, is humble prayer and trust in Him who is the hope of this land of exile.

Ps. CXXXVIII, 12: "But darkness shall not be dark to thee and night shall be light as the day; the dark-

ness thereof and the light thereof are alike to thee," may be used to depict the peculiar state of Purgatory and its atmosphere, woven of night and light.

Ps. LXX, 19 sq., 23: "... O God, who is like to Thee? How great troubles hast Thou shown to me, many and grievous; and turning Thou hast brought me to life and hast brought me back again from the depths of the earth. .... My lips shall greatly rejoice, when I shall sing to Thee, and my soul which Thou hast redeemed," is a dialogue of the soul with God; the soul vents its great woe and yet, at the same time, thanks God for His fatherly love revealed therein, and is refreshed by the prospect of a happy future, when it may join the heavenly choirs.

Ps. LIV, 5 to 7: "My heart is troubled within me; and the fear of death is fallen upon me; .... darkness has covered me, and I said: who shall give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest," depicts the feelings of a soul at the critical moment when it is exiled from the face of God, and the sudden change from light to darkness takes place; also the yearning attempts at soaring up on high; in a word—the Poor Soul's joy and pain.

Ps. CXVII, 15-19: "The voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the just. The right hand of the Lord has exalted me; I shall not die, but live; and shall declare the works of the Lord. The Lord chastising has chastised me: but He has not delivered me over to death. Open ye to me the gates of justice: I will go in to them and give praise to the Lord." An echo of the exul-

tation of the Blessed has reached the soul at its entrance into eternity; it has experienced God's saving power and strength, to which it owes its claim to a home in Heaven. It did not become a prey of death, but obtained certainty of life, which now, in its severe chastisement, gives it comfort. The last sentence is a call for help to the living and a promise that their assistance will be gratefully acknowledged before God.

Ps. XVII, 5 sqq.: "The sorrows of death surrounded me; and the torments of iniquity troubled me; the sorrows of hell encompassed me, and the snares of death prevented me. In my affliction I called upon the Lord, and I cried to my God: and He heard my voice from His holy temple, and my cry came into His ears." A mournful description of Purgatory, emphasizing the soul's privation of freedom and its imprisonment in the realm of death, though brightened by loving intercourse with God through prayer and love.

3. From the book of Job, that "Breviary of human suffering," as it has been called, we will cite only two passages. XIV, 14: "All the days in which I am now in warfare, I expect until my change come; Thou shalt call me, and I will answer Thee, to the work of Thy hands Thou shalt reach out Thy right hand," expresses the striving and longing of the Poor Souls for glory, their painful waiting for the call from above, which will be answered by a joyful jubilant voice; their firm confidence, nay, certainty that in due season God will call them because they belong to Him.

Then there is the touching plaint and call for help in Job XIX, 14-19: "My kinsmen have forsaken me, and they that knew me have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house .... have counted me as a stranger, and I have been like an alien in their eyes; .... and he whom I loved most is turned against me." How often is not this complaint justified! "Out of sight, out of mind!" This text, if properly explained, will effectively counteract the blighting power of forgetfulness, and urgently remind the living of their duty towards the dead.

An important text is Malach. III, 3: "And he shall sit refining and cleansing the silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and shall refine them as gold, and they shall offer sacrifices to the Lord in justice," and the parallel passage, Zach. XIII, 9: "And I will bring the third part through fire and will refine them as silver is refined, and I will try them as gold is tried."

From Isaias we quote IV, 4: "The Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Sion, and shall wash away the blood of Jerusalem out of the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning." At the judgment the flaming eye of His Spirit searches the souls that are worthy of becoming daughters of the heavenly Jerusalem, and He discovers the slightest stains. But His Spirit has also created and, as it were, animates the fire by which these faults and defects are purged.

Then there is the lamentation of Ezechias (Is. XXXVIII, 10 sq., 16): "I said: in the midst of my days

I shall go to the gates of hell: I sought for the residue of my years. I said: I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living. I shall behold man no more, nor the inhabitant of rest .... O Lord, if man's life be such ...., and the life of my spirit be in such things as these, Thou shalt correct me and make me to live." The Poor Soul resigns itself to its fate. Far away from God, far away also from men, with whom it has lived until now, it associates itself to the inhabitants of solitude, but not without a sad feeling of desertion and a secret trembling at the peculiar life into which it has entered, yet certain that God's hand will sustain it. It can apply to itself the word: *"Ecce in pace amaritudo mea amarissima"* (Is. XXXVIII, 17). It has peace after all the struggles, trials, doubts, and uncertainties of life; yet this peace is not a blessed peace, but embittered by severe pains; for "who can dwell with devouring fire, who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Is. XXXIII, 14).

Finally, there is Mich. VII, 8 sqq.: "When I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light. I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him ..... He will bring me forth into the light, I shall behold His justice." The darkness of Purgatory is not so dense that it shuts off the soul completely from God; it is illuminated by the thought and the love of Him. The sufferings caused by the flames which God's wrath has kindled, are great indeed, but they are borne willingly, because the certainty of eternal salvation victoriously conquers grief and pain.

4. Provided a sermon is carefully worked out, even the simplest disposition will do. For instance:

(a) To help the Poor souls is:
1. A duty of justice,
2. A duty of charity.

(b) Our union with the Suffering Church is:
1. A union of veneration,
2. A union of love,
3. A union of prayer.

(c) 1. The Poor Souls' sermon;
2. The Poor Souls' prayer.

(d) 1. Comfort which we can bring the Poor Souls;
2. Solace which the Poor Souls can bring us.

(e) 1. Reason urges us to believe in Purgatory;
2. The heart urges us to pray for those in Purgatory;
3. Both heart and reason urge us to begin our own purification here below.

(b) 1. God is just, for He punishes even the smallest faults;
2. God is merciful: for He accepts our satisfaction for the Poor Souls.

(g) To be solicitous for the Poor Souls is:
1. Very pleasing to God;
2. Very helpful to them;
3. Very profitable for us.

(h) 1. God does well to purge the souls not yet worthy of entering Heaven;

2. We do not do well if we neglect to aid those souls, although we could do it so easily.

(St. Alphonsus de' Liguori)

(i) We have already adverted to Bourdaloue's text: John V, 25 and his division:

1. There are Christians who do not believe in Purgatory;

2. There are others who believe, but are not moved;

3. There are still others who are moved, but do not help the Poor Souls.

His sermon on this topic, in arrangement and argument, is a homiletic masterpiece, worthy of careful study. His well chosen division enables him to influence reason, heart, and will in psychological order.

(j) The "Our Father" may also be used as a source for sermons:

1. The Our Father *OF* the Poor Souls;

2. The Our Father *FOR* the Poor Souls.

Read the touching description in the eleventh Canto of Dante's "Purgatorio," where the souls recite the "Our Father" for themselves and for us. St. Mechtildis also applies the Lord's Prayer to the Poor Souls.

The Eight Beatitudes and the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy may be used in a similar manner.

(k) The *"Requiem aeternam,"* this favorite prayer of the Church for the Poor Souls, may also be adapted for sermons, especially on account of its strong plea for mercy. The three great spiritual blessings: rest, light, and peace, are requested for the Poor Souls, not as if they totally lacked them; for they are at rest from the ceaseless strife of this life; they have peace in the certainty of being saved; they have light, the reflex of the vision of God. But they still lack the beatific rest, the perfect light, heavenly peace, free from pain and sorrow.

(l) The famous orator J. E. Veith commentates the Psalm *"De Profundis"* in a homily with this division:

1. The depths in which the Poor Souls are languishing;
2. Their longing and hope to be freed;
3. The means of their redemption.

(m) A good text is found in the Responsory of the second lesson of the Matins of the dead: *"Qui Lazarum resuscitasti a monumento, Tu eis, Domine, dona requiem et locum indulgentiae."* The raising of Lazarus from the dead suggests the following disposition:

1. Jesus weeps with us for our dead (relate the event; His weeping with the sisters of Lazarus; He is not ashamed of His tears, does not hide them, understands our tears and blesses them; His tender sympathy);

2. Jesus prays with us for our dead (He prays at the grave of Lazarus,—He, the praying heart of mankind; He re-enforces His prayer by sacrifice; indulgences are

a gift from His pierced hands; Christ, the head of the Suffering Church, does not forget her suffering members);

3. Jesus gives our dead back to us (the call of His omnipotence penetrates the night of the grave like a stroke of lightning; He calls back the dead man and restores him to his sisters; He descends into limbo and His redeeming call reverberates through Purgatory and calls ourselves and our beloved dead to an eternal reunion).

(n) Monsabré, in one of his conferences on "The Other World," treats of Purgatory and adduces as an effectual argument the traditions of the human race, depicts the sufferings of the Holy Souls, shows the consoling character of belief in Purgatory, and, finally, indicates the means by which we can render assistance to the Poor Souls.

(o) From P. De La Rue, S. J. (+1725) we have a good sermon for All Souls' Day on the text 2 Mach. XII, 46. "*Sancta cogitatio*": therefore, thoroughly credible; "*salubris cogitatio*": charity demands that we act on it. The first part is apologetical. In the second the hardness and lack of affection of those who refuse to help the Poor Souls is shown up from three biblical instances (the rich man and Lazarus; the cup-bearer of Pharao who forgets Joseph in prison; the brothers of Joseph who cast him into a pit and sit down to eat and drink).

(p) A sermon on the Poor Souls by J. L. Colmar is elaborate, but diffuse in parts. Particularly good is

his argument showing why God does not Himself end the sufferings of these souls; He places His rights and gifts into our hands, and therefore our responsibility is great if we hold the ransom in hand without using it. The disposition of this sermon is quite simple:

1. Prayer for the Poor Souls is salutary for these Souls, and
2. Salutary for ourselves.

(q) Bishop Ehrler, taking his text from Matth. V, 25 sq., elucidates with great precision and in a refined form these three points:

1. The torments of the Poor Souls;
2. The causes of these torments;
3. Their duration.

(r) Another good sermon on the subject is that by A. Gretsch, on the text John V, 25, which, however, is used only in the introduction:

1. Purgatory teaches us to fear God's justice;
2. Purgatory teaches us to love God's mercy.

(s) Canon Stiegele's All Souls' sermon with the simple division:

1. We *must* help the Poor Souls;
2. We *can* help the Poor Souls;

is clear cut and profound and shows how to utilize the thoughts of the liturgy and of the Office of the Dead.

(t) Finally we may mention the short but forcible sermons, nineteen in all, by P. W. Lerch, S. J. (Warnsdorf, 1912).

Chapter XVIII

SOME ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL FOR SERMONS ON THE POOR SOULS

In conclusion we will present a few stories, comparisons, and historical data which may prove useful to the preacher for purposes of explanation and practical application; not as if there were any lack of suitable materials in our literature, but rather because too much of it is of a questionable, bizarre, nay even scandalous character. Careful selection is imperative here, and Msgr. Gutberlet rightly warns against blood-curdling stories from alleged visions and apparitions. We must guard against the mistake committed by medieval indulgence preachers, for the evil results would be even worse now than they were at that time. Do not use any popular tales of apparitions or signs given by the Poor Souls. Stories of this kind are eagerly listened to, but foster superstition rather than faith.

1. The Annals of Lambert of Hersfeld (c. 1075) relate the following visionary dream of St. Anno, Archbishop of Cologne (1010-1075): "Six months before his death the archbishop dreamed he was entering through a splendid portal into a magnificently decorated cathedral. In the sanctuary were sitting, on a number of thrones, his predecessor Heribert, with Archbishops Bardo of Mayence, Boppo and Eberhard of Treves, Bishop Arnulf of Worms and others whom he had known in life, all venerable and glorious to look at and vested in shining

robes. He himself also had on such a robe, but to his utter confusion he noticed on his breast a dark stain, which he tried to cover with his hands as he got ready to take his place on the chair standing ready for him. But Arnulf arose and refused him admission; he told the deeply aggrieved prelate: 'Be not discouraged, but strive to wash off this stain as soon as possible, then you will shortly be received into these dwellings.' When Anno awoke he seriously examined his conscience and consulted a prudent friend. He soon became aware that he had not entirely forgiven certain of his subjects, who the year before had expelled him from his city. He decided to remit their well deserved punishment, allowed the exiles to return, restored their property to them, and as a pledge of reconciliation and full forgiveness, personally gave them the Easter Communion."

2. David answered (2 Kings XIV, 24) the appeal of his son Absalom for forgiveness thus: *Revertatur in domum suam et faciem meam non videat."* This was an intolerable punishment. Absalom certainly was not the best of sons, yet which of the punishments he had to endure for the murder of his brother was the most painful to him? Not his three years' exile in Gessur; not his separation from his property and the comforts of home. He considered his pardon, his recall to his family, his re-instatement into his property of little value, nay, of none at all, as long as he was not permitted to see his father's face. For this favor alone he pleaded through Joab, the general whose mediation had procured his forgiveness: "I beseech thee, therefore, that I may

see the face of the king: and if he be mindful of my iniquity, let him kill me" (2 Kings XIV, 32). This incident may well serve to illustrate the longing of the Poor Souls for the vision of God's countenance.

3. Gretsch depicts the misery of the Poor Souls by means of this parable: "Behold the bride, whom the king has chosen from the wilderness of a distant land. She crosses the seas to join her royal consort; many times, in furious storms, she struggles with death, but she conquers all obstacles. At last she beholds in the distance the kingdom of her beloved. She breathes more freely, her heart trembles with expectation, she recovers from her fatigue. "Ah, how happy I am!" she exclaims; "soon I shall rule; nations will bow before me; the king will love and exalt me." At that very moment pirates rush in, her ship is captured, she is taken prisoner, chained, and dragged to prison. Who can describe or imagine the woes of this unhappy bride?"

4. The condition of the man who was sick with the palsy for thirty years, who could not go down into the pool of Bethesda (John V, 1 sqq.) when it was stirred by the Angel, but complained: "I have no one to put me into the water," offers points of comparison for illustrating the needs of the Poor Souls. They are not entirely excluded from the means of grace and salvation, yet they can do nothing of themselves, but are dependent on the mediation of the living. There is many a one among them who can justly exclaim: *"Non habeo hominem!"*

5. St. John of God, while wandering through the streets of Granada collecting alms for a hospital he intended to build, called out: "Give alms, my brethren, for the love and pity of yourselves." Self-love is also a motive for aiding the Poor Souls. The same Saint, during a conflagration in his hospital, carried the sick through and out of the fire.

6. St. Bernard in his life of St. Malachy relates the following incident: "The sister of this Saint was so worldly-minded that her brother determined not to see her any more as long as she lived. But although he did not see her in the flesh, he was to see her again in spirit. After her death one night he heard a voice telling him that his sister was at the door, complaining that she had had nothing to eat for thirty days. The saint, when he awoke, forthwith understood what food it was of which she was in need; for it was exactly thirty days since he had offered the sacrifice of the Living Bread for her. He now again began to give her this benefit, which he had withheld from her. Soon he saw her coming up to the church. But she could not yet enter, as she was still wearing a black garment. He continued to offer the holy Sacrifice for her every day, and soon saw her a second time, dressed in a lighter garment. Finally, he saw her a third time, clad entirely in white, and surrounded by blessed spirits. See," comments St. Bernard, "what the continued prayer of the just can do!"

7. It was revealed to St. Francis of Assisi one day that he was of the number of the elect, and that paradise was assured to him. This caused him to be beyond him-

self with joy, so that for eight consecutive days, weeping and singing, he kept on repeating: "Paradise, paradise, we shall enter paradise! What do I care for anything else, since I shall possess paradise!" This may serve to exemplify the joy of the Poor Souls arising from their certainty of eternal glory.

8. It is narrated of Bl. Henry Suso, of Ulm, that when a student at Cologne he had a very intimate friend. When they had to part, they entered into an agreement that if one of them should die, the other should remain loyal to him and for a whole year say two Masses for him every week, a requiem Mass on Monday, and one in honor of the Passion of our Lord, on Friday. When Suso's friend died, many years afterwards, he had forgotten his promise. One day, while Suso was deeply absorbed in contemplation, his friend appeared to him and said sadly: "Woe is me, my friend, because of thy faithlessness; how couldst thou forget me?" Suso answered: "I always remembered thee in my holy Masses." But the departed friend said: "That is not enough, fulfill our vow, so that the Precious Blood may extinguish the fire, and I be freed from Purgatory." This he did right loyally and sorrowing over his forgetfulness.

9. How deplorable is the fate of the blind man! But a short time ago he was able to see; he enjoyed the beauties of nature, the waving fields of wheat, the flowers of the meadows, the spreading trees of the forest, and when evening came, he thanked God for the happy smiles of his children and the love shining from their radiant eyes. An accident deprived him of his sight, and now all is night.

How worthy of sympathy is the exiled man! Banished from his native land, separated from his family by a cruel fate, a stranger in a strange land, the language of which he does not understand, he has but one thing left to him: his memory, which does not relieve, but rather increases his woe!

Worthy of sympathy, too, is the poor orphan, suddenly deprived of the protection, care, and love of his parents; forsaken, without support, without a guide; who will take care of him and heal his wounds?

These are but weak analogies of the immeasurable grief and sorrow of the Poor Souls deprived of the beatific vision of God.

10. A political prisoner was languishing in a dungeon. When he had arrived at the limit of his endurance, he wrote to an influential person at court this short note: "On the twenty-seventh of this month, 1760, it will be one hundred thousand hours that I suffer, and two hundred thousand more are waiting for me." History does not record the success of his appeal; but what anguish of soul is not contained in those two lines! The unfortunate man had counted the hours of his captivity! In Purgatory, according to some private revelations, the minutes seem like years, the years like eternities. Many a holy soul may sigh: "It is now one hundred thousand hours that I suffer!"

11. A priest relates: I made the acquaintance of a young man who, judging from his talk and conduct, had not a spark of religion left. On a Sunday, just when divine services closed, I asked this infidel: "When did you

say your last Our Father?" He answered: "Last night." "That is impossible;" I objected; "you, with your conduct, your principles and views of life, you pray? He that does not even believe in a personal God, can not pray."—"You are right," he said, "and yet, I pray an Our Father every night; for if I do not, I can find no rest. I can not fall asleep, no matter how tired I may be. You may wonder at this and, in a way, I wonder at it myself; still, after all, it seems quite natural. My mother was a genuinely Christian woman, who was attached to her children with all her heart and educated us most carefully. Father had died long ago. When hardly more than a boy, I was sent to high school, where infidel teachers robbed me of my faith, of the principles that my mother had implanted into my heart, and of every vestige of religion. When I returned home, after several years, my mother was horrified to find me so changed. With tears and entreaties she adjured me to give up the pernicious maxims of the world and return to the faith. Who knows whether the entreaties of my mother would not have conquered me if I had not left home again. The good influence, the good resolutions and emotions soon ebbed away, when, immediately after the separation from my mother, I was swept right into the whirlpool of society. I drank in full draughts from the intoxicating cup of pleasure. Suddenly a letter from home recalled me to my mother, who wanted to see me once more before she died. I hastened home and found her on her deathbed. Exhausted from her agony, she offered me her cold hand and, looking at me sadly, said broken-heartedly: 'My son, do not forget God entirely—

there is a God—an eternity— a judgment. I feel it, believe me; one does not lie in death—say at least one Our Father daily—for yourself and for me—promise me that you will.' I bowed down and kissed her hand. When I lifted my eyes, she was dead. Those were her last words, and the promise I made to her on her deathbed, I have faithfully kept. This is the reason why I say an Our Father every day; I must do it if I want to rest. I am sure it is my mother who reminds me of it."

"This Pater noster is your anchor of hope, on it depends your salvation," I said, deeply moved, to the young man. Ten years later I heard that this careless, worldly fellow had become converted and was living a model life."

12. Venerable Ann Catherine Emmerich, who conversed intimately with the Poor Souls, says of the efficacy of our assistance to them: "Alas, these Poor Souls have to suffer so much on account of their former carelessness, on account of their easy-going piety, their lack of zeal for the honor of God and for the salvation of their neighbors. What better help could we give them than to offer up for them acts of those virtues which they have neglected in life? How they long for such help! They can not help themselves, but they know that no good thought, no earnest desire that any living person offers for them, is without effect. Whenever any one prays for them, gives alms for them, suffers something for them, it forthwith redounds to their benefit. A priest who says his office with devotion and the intention of making satisfaction for the defects for which the Poor

Souls have to atone, can procure them untold consolations. The power of the priestly blessing reaches down into Purgatory and refreshes the souls to whom it is sent like a dew from Heaven. It makes them glad and happy, like one parched with thirst who receives a drink of fresh water."[1]

13. That the Poor Souls themselves have no other wish than to remain in Purgatory until they are perfectly cleansed, was revealed to St. Gertrude in a vision. She saw the soul of a virtuous nun standing before the Lord, clad in the robe of charity, but she did not raise her eyes, and by her mien showed a desire to leave His presence. Surprised at this, St. Gertrude asked the Lord: "Why dost Thou not take this soul into the arms of Thy infinite love, and why this strange mien of diffidence?" The Saviour lovingly stretched forth His arms to draw that soul closer to Him, but she drew back in deep humility. Even more surprised, Gertrude now asked the soul why she fled from her heavenly Spouse, and received this answer: "Because I am not yet perfectly cleansed from the stains of my sins, and if He would grant me admission to Heaven in this condition, I would not accept it, for glorious as I may appear to you, I know that I am not yet a worthy bride of my Lord."

14. A young Scotchman, whose brother had dropped dead at his side at a banquet, was deeply affected by this sad event. He knew that nothing defiled can enter Heaven, and since his creed knew nothing of an in-

[1] Schmöger's Life of A. K. Emmerich, III, 413.

termediate state between Heaven and hell, he conceived a terrible anxiety as to the fate of his brother. This vexed him day and night. So on All Souls' Day he wrote to Abbé Gaume: "For the love of my brother I wish to embrace your faith. I shall breathe more easily when I can pray for him. Your faith alone makes it possible for us to help each other even after death. Your prayers take from the grave its terrible silence; you still converse with those who have departed this life; you know that human weakness which is no crime, yet is not purity either. Between Heaven and hell God has revealed to you a place of atonement; in this place, perhaps, my brother is, and I want to become a Catholic to obtain his release."

15. The pagans placed vessels with food and drink upon the graves of their dead and laid many things which had been indispensable to them in life into their tombs. We have other gifts for our dead—not imaginary, but real gifts that tend to their salvation: good works and prayers which we offer for them, and the true Bread of Life. The nations among whom the vendetta was prevalent imposed it as a duty upon the nearest relative of the dead to persecute and kill the enemy in order to procure peace for the soul of the murdered man. We, on the contrary, have a blood of infinite value, shed for peace; a sacrifice which we may also offer for the members of the Suffering Church.

16. During the Crusades a Christian knight fell into the hands of the Turks and was cast into a dark dungeon. After a long time he was promised his liberty,

but only on the payment of such an enormous ransom that he gave up all hope. But he had not taken into account the love of his daughter, who wandered through Europe and begged, penny by penny, until she was able to bring him the amount he needed.

17. The "Eight Beatitudes" may be utilized to describe the joys of the Poor Souls in Purgatory.

18. St. Peter Damian had lost his parents when still a boy, and was raised by a hard-hearted brother, who treated him cruelly and left him destitute of even the necessaries of life. One day the boy found a large coin. He imagined himself the possessor of a treasure and thought of many things he could get for the money. But finally the thought that there were still poorer ones than himself conquered: he gave the money to a priest and asked him to say a Mass for the Poor Souls. From that day on his life was completely changed; another brother, who was of a more gentle character, took care of him, and allowed him to study, so that he could enter the clerical state.

19. Outside the gates of Rome is a Church bearing the title Santa Maria Scala Coeli. When St. Bernard lived nearby, in the monastery of SS. Vincent and Anastasius, he used to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass for the dead in this church. Here, one day in a vision, he saw the redeemed souls ascending to Heaven by a ladder, accompanied by angels. This apparition gave the church its name and is represented on a painting behind the altar. It shows how abundantly rich we are through

the holy sacrifice of the Mass, so that we are able to help the Poor Souls.

20. A Bavarian official, Councillor Schönwerth, says of the peasants of his home district, the Upper Palatinate: "Nowhere else, perhaps, has the doctrine of Purgatory taken such deep root and is it reflected so strongly in the customs of daily life. The peasant of that section is mindful of the Poor Souls as soon as he awakens in in the morning. He does not leave his room or enter the church without sprinkling holy water for them. In thanking for a gift he says: 'God reward you for the Poor Souls.' When he suffers a mishap or an accident, he offers his pains to God for the Poor Souls; when he is insulted, he forgives in order that God may forgive the Poor Souls. They are, as it were, the inmates of his home, the friends with whom he holds loving intercourse. He does not undertake any work of importance without thinking of the Poor Souls. From early dawn until the setting of the sun he remembers them, and, in turn, he asks them for help in his difficulties."

21. In some countries of the Orient, we are told, the Arabs are accustomed at nightfall to go to the place where the ashes of their beloved dead are deposited, to wander about sadly and thoughtfully along the sombre paths of the cemetery, to sit down at the graves of their loved ones, and to adorn them with flowers, plants, and fragrant spices. Immovably the Arab spends hours there as in a dream, his head bowed down to the ground, in deep mourning, silent meditation, and pious recollection. Suddenly, in the dark of the night, at the

soughing of the evening breezes, he fancies he hears weak, plaintive, loving voices calling and whispering his name, and in the ecstasy of his excited imagination he calls out to those beloved shadows: "Ah, is it you, dear souls of my friends, is it you whose golden vials are pouring forth these balsamic odors of the night? Is it your sweet melodious songs that resound through the air? Is it you whose sacred charms make this beloved spot where you are slumbering, so sweet to me?" And relapsing into his pensive mood and silence, he listens to those imaginary voices, his heart expands, his grief is assuaged, and his tears cease to flow. Behold the consolation of a poor infidel; he has no better one! We have more and real comfort!

22. "He shall sit refining and cleansing the silver" (Mal. III, 3). What a beautiful thought is contained in these words. It is said that the refiner of silver and gold watches the vapors arising from the melting-pot until his own countenance is reflected as from a mirror brightly shining on the surface of the seething and melting mass. Then he knows that his work is done. Does not the heavenly Refiner do the same?

23. Once upon a time blood was poured over the graves of the dead and the sorrowing shadows were invited to drink from this flood still warm with life. This is a clumsy symbol of the mystery of justice and love, to which both the living and the dead owe their salvation. How much more fortunate are we, who can send beyond the graves the Blood of a God, sacrificed day by day upon our altars, and see it descend to the shores of that realm in which our dear ones are suffering.

Chapter XIX

CONCLUSION

Cardinal Bona concludes his commentary on the *Officium Defunctorum* with these words: "*Illud autem in fine monendum, ut cum oramus pro mortuis, mortis quoque nostrae recordemur, sicut scriptum est: 'Memorare novissima tua et in aeternum non peccabis.'*

This may also be the concluding thought for the author and the readers of this book. The two thoughts: of the dead and of death, call each other. If we do not forget the dead, they will not let us forget our own death, and thus render us the greatest service in life.

Who of us has not reason to fear—or we should rather say, who does not hope that the barque of death will some day land him on the silent shores of Purgatory for a longer or shorter sojourn?

This prospect ought to rouse our interest in that mysterious realm. We must try to familiarize ourselves with it and to make friends over there, who will receive us as their benefactors. We must also be interested in showing others the road leading thither, so that they in turn may find and visit us when we are there. Let us emphasize once more: By the faith in Purgatory our life's sphere is enriched and our horizon is widened beyond the limits of this world, and it is absurd to fear that a melancholy saddening of life's views and a weakening of life's energies might be the consequence

of a too close intimacy with the dead. The contrary is true. The frequent thought of death drives away fear, and the remembrance of the dead entails as many glad considerations as sad ones. St. Paul says that the departed are in our hearts, *ad commoriendum et convivendum"* (2 Cor. VII, 3). We share our joys and griefs with them.

St. Bernard exhorts us to treat the dead not only with compassion, but also with hopeful congratulations; we should indeed, feel compassion with them because they suffer in Purgatory; but we should also rejoice with them because God will soon dry their tears.[2] This is not merely an exchange of sentiments, but of real spiritual goods; an exchange of powers and, at the same time, a safe investment in the world beyond, the interest of which will, some day, relieve our poverty according to the promise of Jesus: "Give and it shall be given unto you ....; for with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured unto you again." (Luke VI, 38).

So let us remain in union with these chosen, noble, and beloved souls; let us remain with them *"ad commoriendum et convivendum!"*

[2] *Serm. XVI de Diversis*, ed. Migne, II, 1117.

PART II

SPECIMEN SERMONS ON THE POOR SOULS

I. *A SERMON FOR ALL SOULS' DAY*

> "Look Thou upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor." (Ps. XXIV, 16)

I just came from the Holy Souls. They cordially salute you. They are glad that Christian charity has brought you here in such large numbers. They base great hopes on this hour and these days. I have dwelled with these good souls for a long time, and they have entrusted me with a message to you. This message deserves your earnest attention and deepest sympathy. It is a message of great suffering and a cry for help. They said to me: "Tell the people what we ourselves would like so much to tell them. Open communication between us and those we have left behind. Exhort them in our name: 'Look down on us and have mercy on us; for we are lonely and poor.' Surely they will listen to you!" This is their hope, and it is my hope also, and inspired by it I will deliver to you the message I bring from the other world. Listen then to the admonition of the Poor Souls! Listen to their petition!

When Dives was buried in hell, his heart was touched by a last stroke of pity before he was plunged into the flames of pain and hatred. He remembered his five brothers, who were leading a life of debauchery, as he himself had done, and he knew their guilt would land

them in the same place to which he had gone. So he addressed himself to Father Abraham, asking him to send Lazarus to the house of his father and entreat them to beware lest they should be consigned to this place of torments (Luke XVI, 27 sqq.). But his request was denied.

The Poor Souls are not denied the services of a messenger of love, for even in Purgatory love cares for the beloved on earth and desires nothing more earnestly than that they should be saved and escape the tortures of hell as well as those of Purgatory. I am their messenger to-day.

I will lead you to them! By the road of faith let us descend into the realm of the dead. We approach the dreary, mournful world, situated between Heaven and hell, which serves as a dwelling place for those who have finished well, but are still infected with stains of sin, still burdened with guilt, and subject to punishment. They are being purged by fire and longingly wait for the angel who will announce to them the end of their probation and lead them upward into eternal light.

We are standing at the iron portals of Purgatory. What do we hear? Touching hymns and prayers. Wonderful songs flowing and ebbing in alternate grief and joy, love and complaint, sorrow and hope. Listen to the loud chorus of joy and gratitude proclaiming that the time of danger and temptation is over, the battle of life is won, the anguish of death is conquered, and eternal life is assured. All join in the jubilant strain: "I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify Thy name forever: for Thy mercy is great

towards me, and Thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell." (Ps. LXXXV, 12 sq.).

But mournful lamentations mingle with this hymn of gratitude: "In the midst of our days we had to go to the gates of hell: we miss the residue of our days; not do we see the Lord God in the land of the living; we do behold man no more, but only the inhabitant of rest" (Is. XXXVIII, 10 sq.). "My days have passed more swiftly than the web is cut by the weaver." (Job VII, 6). "From morning even to night he has made an end of us; in peace is our bitterness most bitter; we can only recount all the years of our life in the bitterness of our soul." (Is. XXXVIII, 12 sqq.). "Oh, why did we not make better use of the time of grace? Why did we not serve God more zealously and work for the salvation of our souls?"

What a warning for us! What a stern *"Memento mori"* for us foolish men, who think of death so rarely but live from day to day as if life would never end, and dream of a kind of earthly immortality although we are tottering to the grave. Mortal man, learn wisdom from the dead! Heed the Poor Souls' warning: "To-day is my turn, tomorrow will be yours!"

Listen at the gate of Purgatory. What do you hear? Sweet, enraptured hymns of love; echoes of that blessed moment when the Holy Souls were allowed to see God for the first time, and saw Him as He is: "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength; the Lord is my firmament, my refuge and my deliverer" (Ps. XVII, 2 sq.); "as the hart panteth after the fountain of water, so

my soul panteth after Thee, O God" (Ps. XLI, 2 sq.) Suddenly, however, these hymns cease and end in trembling and fear; with a shudder the Poor Souls remember the awful moment when the flaming eye of the Judge was fixed upon the stains and spots with which they were still infected. Never can they forget this glance. It burns into their conscience, it fills them with dread and fear, and trembling they cry out and pray: "How terrible Thou art, O God, in Thy counsels over the sons of men; for Thou hast proved us; Thou hast tried us by fire, as silver is tried" (Ps. LXV, 5 and 10); "Thy wrath hath come upon us; and Thy terrors have troubled us, they have come round about us like water all the day" (Ps. LXXXVII, 17 sq.); "Oh, that we had feared Thee more on earth, then we would not need to fear Thee now!"

Truly God's justice and holiness are awful, they are as great as His mercy, and not the smallest stain can escape His eye; even the minutest faults and punishments must be atoned and paid by terrible pains! If these noble souls must lament thus pitifully, how shall we miserable mortals fare? If they must suffer so severely for small faults, what shall become of me who make light of grievous sins? If the fire of God's justice searches every man's work (1 Cor. III, 13), what will be left of my life and works? O mortal man, learn wisdom from the dead; give up your criminal carelessness, be faithful to your duties, make use of your time, as long as it is day!

Again listen. What do you hear now? Happy songs of home, hope, and joyful confidence. "Though I

should walk in the midst of the shadows of death," they sing, "I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me, O Lord; Thy rod and Thy staff have comforted me" (Ps. XXII, 4),—even though they have strongly tested me. Turn, O my soul, into thy rest"—even though the pains be great—"for the Lord has been bountiful to thee, He has delivered my soul from death: I will please the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. CXIV, 7 sqq.)

But once more the joyful hymns are silenced by melancholy songs of yearning: "Woe is me, that my sojourn is prolonged, my soul has been long a sojourner" (Ps. CXIX, 5 to 6) far away from home. "Who can dwell with devouring fire and with everlasting burnings?" (Is. XXXIII, 14). My soul is inconsolable: "I remembered God and I am filled with delight, and was exercised and my spirit swooned away" (Ps. LXXVI, 4); "when shall I come and appear before the face of the Lord?" (Ps. XLI, 3).

And yet we cling with all our heart to the goods and vanities of this world; we think so little of our eternal home, waste time and graces, and while performing our earthly tasks, we neglect the salvation of our soul and our eternal destination! O mortal man, learn wisdom from the dead! Keep up intercourse with the Poor Souls; visit them frequently; appeal to them in the hour of temptation and trial; ask their advice in difficult problems; go to school and learn wisdom, and, in turn, show your gratitude by being merciful to them; look upon them and have pity on them, for they are poor and lonely!

"Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke XVI, 24). Thus the rich man lamented and entreated, but he was told that there was no way, no path of mercy into the abyss of hell. Into the prison of Purgatory there are many ways of charity and mercy. At any time we can send to the Poor Souls greetings, comfort and help, refreshment and redemption. But, alas, little use is made of these possibilities, because of our weak faith, because of our thoughtlessness, because of our lack of charity and our forgetfulness.

You, my Brethren, need not to be confirmed in your faith in the existence of Purgatory. You hold the doctrine firmly. You know that it is founded on S. Scripture, that it was taught by the Church from the beginning, that it is clearly expressed on the oldest epitaphs found in the Catacombs, is testified to by the holy Fathers, and has been solemnly defined by the Church.

You also understand that souls that enter eternity in the state of grace, but with faults and imperfections, with punishments not yet undergone, can not immediately enter the kingdom of Heaven, over the entrance of which is written: "Nothing defiled can enter here." Neither can they be condemned to hell, over the gates of which are inscribed the terrible words: "All hope abandon ye who enter here."

For them the time of grace and forgiveness is past; therefore their punishments can not simply be remitted. For them the time of working and acquiring merits is

over: therefore they can not make satisfaction for their guilt; can not efface the stains of their sins by good works. There is only one way left for them, that of purification by fire. What a hard, long, and painful way! And they can do nothing to shorten it; they can only wait and suffer!

But how wonderful is the compromise entered into by God's justice and His mercy, through which satisfaction can be given vicariously and we may intercede for these Poor Souls by the power of the Communion of Saints, to which we and they belong, so that we, still living in the kingdom of grace, can mediate grace and indulgence for them! God's mercy has commended to us these souls, whom His justice must still punish and exclude from Heaven. He wills that we should pray for them, atone and satisfy for them; and He will accept and attribute all our good works to them, as if they themselves had performed them, and He will reward both these souls and us!

All this we know because we believe it; all that is necessary is that we act according to this belief, that we make use of our power, and that we do not refuse the Poor Souls our help. Therefore I beg of you to-day,—no, not I, but from the nether world there arise a thousand voices: "Look and have mercy on us, for we are poor and lonely!" You must not close your ears to this call, for there are among these voices some that you know!

Listen! Is not that the voice of your father? "My son, my daughter," it says, "have you forgotten me? When

I laid my hand in blessing on your head for the last time, you promised me never to forget me and to pray for me. For a long time your faithful mementos descended upon me like refreshing dew, you gave me a share in many holy Masses and communions. Why is it so no longer? Why have you become estranged from me? Why are your prayers becoming so rare, your mementoes so listless?"

Listen! Another voice is calling: "Have mercy on me, for I am lonely and poor!" My God, it is the voice of your mother! That voice you have surely not forgotten. So long, oh, so long, have I waited for you, my child, but you never come. How many tears you shed for me at my death! Surely your heart has not turned from me now? But, tell me, how is it that the angels who bring tokens of love from the living to the Poor Souls, and mark off on our prison term the merits they acquire for us,—how is it that they so seldom bring me a greeting, a consolation, a gift of love from you? O my child, whom I bore beneath my heart, for whom I sighed even in death, of whom I think unceasingly even in my torments, do not forsake me, stretch out your hand to help me out of these flames, lead me to God and into eternal rest and peace!"

"Have mercy on us, for we are lonely and poor!" Whose voices are these? Your brother is among them, your sister, your husband, your wife, a friend, a benefactor, your late pastor, your deceased bishop. They all lament and beg: "Forget us not. To be forgotten is so hard. Remember us, but not with empty reminiscences

and sentiments, but with effective prayers; give us a share in your holy Masses; we can no longer assist at the divine sacrifice; we can draw from its salutary fountains only through your mediation; receive holy Communion for us,—we can no longer receive it!"

And yet another call comes from the depths, sadder and more plaintive than the rest: "Have mercy on us, for we are lonely and poor!" And who are you? "We are the poorest of all the Poor Souls; no one remembers us, only our dear mother, the Church, includes us in her prayers, and we receive a share of the common suffrage of the faithful."—Poor Souls, have you no one on earth who is near to you?—"Oh yes, we have relatives, but they do not think of their own salvation, much less of ours! We have kinfolk to whom we left money and property, but they never remember those who earned it for them. Yes, I have a son, but he has lost his faith and ridicules Purgatory instead of helping his parents; yes, we have a daughter, but she travels the primrose path of frivolity and sin, is bent on pleasure, and lets her parents languish in Purgatory. All we can do is to appeal to you. Have mercy, for we are lonely and poor!"

Such is the admonition and appeal of the Poor Souls. I have delivered their message to you. You have heard it. Now do what faith and love urge you to do. Surely you will not forget, you will not forsake your dear departed relatives and friends. They will not have to complain with holy Job: "My kinsmen have forgotten me, and they that knew me have forsaken me; and he whom

I loved most, is turned against me" (Job XIX, 14 and 19). During this season devoted to the Poor Souls descend in spirit into the nether world and learn wisdom from the dead. Bring them the help they desire by prayers, alms, and indulgences, by offering up holy Masses and Communions for their redemption.

A beautiful legend says that when Jesus was bleeding to death on the Cross, an angel asked Him to whom the last drop of His Heart's Blood should belong, and He answered: "To my beloved Mother, that she may the more easily endure her sorrow." "Not so, my Son," Mary is said to have answered, "grant it to the souls in Purgatory, that they may be free from pain on at least one day of the year." This is a pious legend. But it is true that the Blood of Christ, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, and our own mediation, can be directed to the Poor Souls and will relieve their pains and shorten their time of penance.

Go, therefore, and make use of the wonderful power you possess of applying the merits and graces of the Precious Blood to the Poor Souls. Work and do good. Here is a vast field of charity and mercy: here are afflicted souls to be comforted, captives to be freed, hungry souls to be fed, thirsty souls to be supplied with drink, and not a single one amongst them is unworthy or ungrateful. Make unto yourselves friends in the world beyond, so that, when your own end comes, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings (Luke XVI, 9)!—*Amen!*

2. *ANOTHER SERMON FOR ALL SOULS' DAY*

"Pray for one another, that you may be saved; for the continual prayer of the just man availeth much."
(Jas. V, 16)

All over the globe man's inventive genius has stretched a net of wires that enable us to converse with one another, not merely by signs, but by means of living words, from mouth to mouth, though we are hundreds of miles apart; to send thoughts and commands with lightning speed to the ends of the world; to transmit immense power over enormous distances and cause it to work for us far from the place of its origin.

So far man's genius and power reach. But Christian faith and love reach even farther. They have laid their lines not only to foreign countries and continents, but extended them to the world beyond. By means of the golden wires of prayer, faith establishes connection with the Saints in Heaven and with the Poor Souls in Purgatory, not only for the communication of words and thoughts, but for an exchange of power and energy.

"Pray for one another, that you may be saved, for the prayer of the just man availeth much." This advice and assurance of St. James applies not only within the limits of the Militant Church on earth, but it extends to the Triumphant Church and the Suffering Church beyond. We invoke the saints in Heaven, and they pray for us and send us graces, that we may obtain salvation. The saints in Heaven and the faithful on earth send help to the Poor Souls, that they may reach their

final goal. The Poor Souls, in their turn, pray for us, and the prayer of these just souls availeth much for our salvation. Behold here the never-interrupted telephonic connection, the wonderful transmission of power from one realm of the Church to the others. This morning we held a prayerful conversation with the saints in heaven; let us now seek to establish connection with the Poor Souls in Purgatory.

Here lies a poor dying man. All the resources of medical science are exhausted. Even the most tender love can find no means of relief, and has nothing but tears. How the dying man's face is changing! How his eyes stare! How he pants and his breath rattles! Behold the battle between life and death! Death remains victorious! Now it takes possession of the body, limb by limb. Another powerless attempt at resistance, a last bracing up of the waning energy; a few convulsive moves, ... and now it is over .... the body falls back heavily and grows cold and stiff.

And the soul? Amid the weeping of those left behind, the soul starts on its great journey into the world beyond. With the rapidity of thought it traverses the realm of the visible creation and soon leaves space and time behind The silence of eternity, the tremors of infinity encircle it. Higher and ever higher goes its flight. Now it stands before the judgment seat of Christ. The soul sees Him in Whom it has believed—or not believed. He looks it through with a glance that penetrates and sets aflame its very being. Happy the soul that can sustain His gaze; that is all light in His

sight, and reflects the sun of His countenance as a spotless mirror! A smile from His lips, a burning, loving glance of His eye, and the elect soul enters into glory in blessed rapture and ecstasy.

But how frightful if the soul approaches this realm of light as a child of darkness, without grace, without charity. Its own guilt will then cry out to the Judge: "Condemn me, Thou canst not do otherwise!" Like a stroke of lightning the flaming gaze of the Judge will flash through it and give it over to eternal death, and as it crashes down into hell, the damned soul will wail despairingly: "Thou couldst not but condemn me; I myself forced Thee to do it; and my eternal damnation is my own fault!"

But what if the soul appears free from grievous guilt and in the state of grace, but infected with lesser faults and burdened with unpaid debts? Nothing can escape the eye of the Great Judge. His glance penetrates the very substance of the soul and is fixed on these dark stains. He would not be the all-holy God if He received the soul into eternal glory with all these faults and imperfections. He would not be the all-merciful Redeemer if He would cast the soul into hell for these venial faults. What shall be its fate? We read the answer in the book of Malachy the Prophet: "The Lord shall sit refining and cleansing the silver. He shall purify the sons of Levi and shall refine them as gold and silver" (Mal. III, 3). "They shall be saved," says St. Paul, "yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. III, 15). They must atone and suffer in the flames of Purgatory, until the last spot is deleted, until the last farthing is paid. Thus the

early Church answers through the mouths of her holy Fathers, through the inscriptions on the tombstones of the Catacombs, through her liturgical prayers and through the solemn definitions of her teaching office.

To such a soul the Judge turns lovingly and says: "Thou art mine, for thou bearest my image. Thou hast preserved the faith, thou hast consummated thy course, and the crown of justice is laid up for thee. But see, here ..... and here ....!" And now His eyes look angry, and His words are changed into a sentence: "What are these negligences and imperfections, these remains of sin and these penalties? Did I not give you time, opportunities, and graces sufficient to efface them during your earthly life? You are silent, you confess, you realize that you can not enter here thus and remain with Me. Remission by grace is no longer possible, the time of grace is past. Go away from my face, suffer and atone until you are all pure. Then I shall send your angel, that he may lead you back into my presence, and you shall abide with me eternally."

And the soul, trembling with fear, adores the just sentence of the Judge; a last glance of farewell into His countenance, and willingly if follows its Guardian Angel, who leads it down into the gaol of Purgatory. And now begin that peculiar life which remains a mystery to us, but into which faith allows us to glimpse;—a life so near to glory and yet so far from it, so entirely united with God and yet so completely exiled from Him, mixed of rays of joy and flames of fire, composed, as it were, of Heaven and hell.

Of Heaven and hell! They are wrong who describe Purgatory as a veritable hell, differing from hell proper only in so far as it does not last forever. This implies an injustice to God and to the Poor Souls. St. Francis de Sales truly says that Purgatory might be called a hell in view of its torments, but also a Heaven because of its many joys, the certainty of salvation, the love of God, and the total resignation to His holy will, because of the delight still lingering in the Holy Souls who have seen the countenance of the Saviour, because of the touching patience with which they bear their sufferings, because of the consoling consciousness that what separates them from God vanishes more and more, because of the hope that their redemption will be hastened by the intercession of their brethren on earth.

But alas, into this Heaven there is infused something of the terror and darkness, of the pains and tortures of hell. With the prophet the Poor Souls complain: "*In pace amaritudo mea amarissima,*" behold, in peace is my bitterness most bitter (Is. XXXVIII, 17); sweet peace is far from me.

Who can have peace when he must abide with devouring fire, in eternal flames? (Is. XXXIII, 14). Oh, how this fire of justice penetrates with its supernatural flames into the very being of those souls, and racks them with pains and torments beyond the limits of the human imagination! These pains are acuter and intenser, says St. Augustine, than anything a man can endure in this world, and we know how much we *can* endure (*In Ps.*, 37).

Who can have peace while he lives in exile, consumed by a burning desire for his heavenly home, and worries, and labors, and strives without being able to obtain anything? Such is the grief of the Poor Souls. The shadows of death are upon them, the night has come when no man can work. Gone is the time for good works, for acquiring personal merits. Gone the time when every prayer, every virtuous act, every suffering satisfied for sin and earned an eternal reward. Gone the time when access was open daily and hourly to the treasury of graces and to the fountains of redemption. The Poor Souls cannot do anything for themselves. All they can do is to suffer and wait. Theirs is indeed a restless peace, a peaceless rest!

Still, hope and charity remain as their faithful companions, weaving many a holy joy into their life: but they can not extinguish those flames, they can not cool those burning fires, they can not shorten the time of suffering, not even by one single moment. And although solace and joy come from hope and charity, yet they also increase the anguish of the soul. Charity, the love of God, begets a contrition and sorrow so burning and deep that we with our sinful habits can not even imagine it, and the guilty soul will never cease to cry out: "Woe is me, that I did not serve God more faithfully, that I did not make better use of the time of grace, that I did not do penance for my sins!" And hope, based on the certainty of salvation, nourishes in them a yearning so terrific that if the soul were mortal, it would instantly die. But this love and desire strike an iron wall,

the impossibility of doing anything which could cancel their punishment, shorten their pain, or hasten their redemption.

Such is the life of the Poor Souls in Purgatory. Justly, therefore, are they called POOR Souls. Can you refuse them compassion, can you look on hard-heartedly as they suffer?—as your father suffers?—your mother —your brother, your sister, your friend? Can you remain inactive, mercilessly refuse your help, although you can help so easily? You *can* help them. They are poor and you are rich. They can do nothing for themselves; you can do everything for them. They can no longer assist at holy Mass and cleanse themselves in the Blood of Christ; you can offer the holy sacrifice and Christ's Precious Blood for them. They can no longer eat of the Bread of Life; you can receive it for them in holy Communion. They can no longer perform good works or pay their debt by giving alms; you can do it for them. They can no longer draw from the fountain of graces flowing in the Church; you can apply indulgences to them. Their prayer cannot shorten nor relieve their pains; your prayer descends to them like refreshing dew, and brings the hour of their redemption nearer. For it is God's holy will, and an agreement, as it were, between His justice and His mercy, that He will accept all that we do for the Poor Souls just as if they had done it themselves. He Himself has appointed us mediators between Him and them. He says to us: "Have mercy on these souls, whom my justice must punish; intercede for them, for they can no longer work; pray for them, atone for them, and as I live, all you do in holy charity, I will look upon

as if they had done it. Yea, even more, I will look upon it as if you had done it for Me, and in the day of judgment I will say to you: "Come ye blessed of my Father, for I was in prison and you have come to visit me; and when you shall ask: Lord, when have we seen Thee in prison and came to Thee? I shall answer: amen, amen, all you did for the Poor Souls in the prison of Purgatory, you have done it to Me." (Cfr. Matt. XXV, 36 sqq.)

Such power God has put into our hands, and what else does He wish but that we use it? "Pray for one another that you may be saved; for the continual prayer of the just availeth much." This exhortation of the Apostle includes the departed souls, and prayer for them availeth much if it is frequent, continuous, and persevering. It availeth much when it is regular, daily, instant, and in particular, when it is immersed in the Blood of the holy sacrifice, fortified by good works and indulgences, and supported by alms. Yes, then it availeth much. It opens the prisons, it frees the captives, it extinguishes the flames, it puts an end to their pains and makes the Poor Souls immensely rich, glorious, and eternally happy.

You know how the Poor Souls suffer and how easily you can help them, and yet you refuse them your aid? Refuse it to whom? To your father, to your mother, to your friend, to your brother, to your sister, and to many, perhaps, whom here below you did not thank, did not obey, towards whom you did not act as you should have acted! To many a one, perhaps, who had to go into

these flames through your fault! And still you dare to brag of your good heart? Shame on you, and beware lest your heart become altogether hardened and impervious to grace! Let the voice of blood, the voice of faith, the voice of charity, again and again remind you of your duty towards the dead; make up for what you have neglected by increased zeal; during this month descend every day into the silent realm of Purgatory, converse with the Poor Souls, learn wisdom from them, and pray for them!

Here, too, applies the word of the Apostle: "Let your abundance supply their want, that their abundance may also supply your want" (2 Cor. VIII, 14). Even though they can do nothing for themselves, they can do much for you. Much availeth their continual prayer, even now while they are in Purgatory; for they are just. Much more will it avail when they shall have entered into glory. Oh, how we need that prayer in the dangers and temptations of life; and how we shall long for their prayers when we ourselves shall languish in the flames of Purgatory, who knows how soon . . . ., how soon . . . ., how very soon! *Amen.*

3. *A SERMON FOR GOOD FRIDAY*

"Crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell."

(Apostle's Creed)

At last quiet reigns on Golgotha. The executioners have finished their work. The piercing sound of the hammers has died away. The raving, blaspheming, mocking rabble has departed. The darkness which had enveloped the patient Sufferer on the Cross like a black veil, as if to protect Him, oppresses the souls of the multitude like a nightmare.

Now He alone has the floor, Jesus on the Cross. Loud and clear, like a canticle of eternal love, comes the voice from above: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."—"To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."—Gentle and sad sounds the legacy to Mary and John: "Son, see thy mother; Woman, see thy son."—Wailing and languishing is the cry: "I thirst."—Piercing and full of terror His complaint: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"—Powerful and majestic His final word: "It is consummated!"

Daylight has returned. It is to be a witness to what is happening in the greatest hour of the world's history. The end is near. Slowly, in dark, heavy drops, the Blood is dripping down from His wounds. The agonizing tension of the sacred Body is relaxing. From His lips is heard His last word, His dying sigh: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The weary eyes close. The sacred Head sinks down on the breast. He dies . . . ., He is dead!

And at the moment when His soul departs, the curtain of the Temple is rent from top to bottom; the earth quakes, and the rocks are split asunder; the graves open, and the corpses rise and walk about; the enemies of Jesus flee, the people strike their breast, and the Roman centurion testifies: "Verily, this man was the Son of God!"

Again stillness reigns on Golgotha. Love is at work. The friends of Jesus take His Body from the Cross, wrap it in pure linen and precious spices, and tenderly lay it into the grave. "Crucified, died, and was buried." Once before on Good Friday we have, in spirit, helped the holy men and women in their labor of love. To-day let us follow, not His Body, but His Soul. Whither does it go after leaving the Body? We should not know, had not God revealed it to us. This revelation is embodied in our Creed: "Descended into hell." The fact was revealed to us, and was inserted into the Creed, because it has an important bearing on our salvation. Let us, for this reason, try to make clear to ourselves what it means.

It is the belief of the Church, found in holy Scripture, and witnessed by the Fathers from the beginning, that after the soul of Jesus had left His Body, it went, indissolubly united with His divinity, down into the realm of the dead and remained there as long as His Body rested in the grave. "Descended into hell."

What a strange journey! It will always remain a mystery which we cannot entirely fathom. But this much Scripture and the Church tell us: The Saviour

descends into the realm of the dead, not as a victim of death, not as one vanquished, not as a captive, but as a triumphant conqueror.

Dying, He did not fall under the power of death, but broke this power. He took the keys of death and hell (Apoc. I, 18), and entered into that awful realm with the cry: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" This is the first province of His Messianic kingdom of which he takes possession; and death, hell, and the great host of the dead must bow before Him, and pay Him homage as the Lord over life and death. Forthwith the dead send their messengers into the world of the living, that their corpses may come forth from the graves, and show themselves in the streets of Jerusalem, so as to give testimony, in the name of the lower world, on behalf of him who died on the Cross. (Matth. XXVII, 52).

But in the lower world, pale Death tremblingly pays homage, and with a hollow voice proclaims Jesus God and Lord. Exultingly the saints and just men of the Old Covenant salute Him in the limbo; sweetly and plaintively the Poor Souls in Purgatory join in the chorus of adoration, and even the wicked spirits in hell must testify: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction." (Apoc. V, 12).

To us mortal men, who are assembled here to-day around the Cross, there ascends from those lower regions a cry, like a call to awake from sleep, like a powerful admonition: "Believe in Him who died on the Cross!

Do not deny Him! Do not doubt Him! It is He! Do not think little of Him who hangs on the Cross and dies in such ignominy:—He is the Son of God! His death is no proof against Him, but for Him. By His cross He has destroyed death, conquered the kingdom of death; and whosoever does not honor Him in life, *must* honor Him after death; "for to this end Christ died and rose again, that He might be Lord over the dead and the living" (Rom. XIV, 9).

But even in the nether world His kingdom and His glory are for the salvation of all who have a good will. Even there He goes, as St. Peter tells us, to preach the gospel to the dead (1 Petr. III, 19; IV, 6). To whom among the dead? Not to the damned in hell, for no preaching, no gospel can avail them. He preaches to the spirits in limbo; to the Patriarchs and Prophets; to all those who have departed in faith and grace, beginning with Adam and Eve, down to the penitent thief who has just arrived; to all those who live here in limbo as in a Paradise, free from woe and pain, but full of longing for the Redeemer and for Heaven.

To-day He comes and brings the glad tidings that the sacrifice of the Redemption is consummated, that limbo is to cease, that they are free, that the period of waiting is at an end, and that all will enter Heaven with Him in triumph. That certainly was a glad message and a gracious visitation. Thus the Lord, as Tertullian says, made those spirits partakers of Himself, established personal relations with them, assumed them into the New Covenant; baptized them as it were, in His death, and sprin-

kled them with His Precious Blood; changed their faith into vision, their hope into blessed fulfillment, and perfected their love into eternal union. What exultations and outbursts of gratitude must have greeted His arrival! With what happiness must these neophytes of bliss have intoned their canticle: "To Him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honor, and glory, and power, for ever and ever, ... because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in thy blood." (Apoc. V, 13; 9).

But there were other inhabitants of those lower regions, less happy than those in the Paradise of limbo, yet chosen souls destined for Heaven. I mean the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Did our Saviour visit them also? Did He preach to them, too? St. Peter mentions amongst those who listened to Christ's sermon in limbo those who, at one time, when the ark was a-building, were unbelieving (1 Pet. III, 20), but who, when the waters of the deluge rushed in upon them, became converted and escaped hell. Were they still in Purgatory, or were they in limbo? We do not know. The Church has not decided the question whether or not Christ visited Purgatory. Several of the Fathers think He did. We may affirm it without doubt. Yea, we can hardly imagine that the Saviour should have passed by those Holy Souls who were truly his own, united with Him by faith and love, and so worthy and urgently in need of consolation. We may certainly apply to Christ's journey into the infernal regions the word of eternal Wisdom in the book of Jesus, the son of Sirach: "I will penetrate to *all*

the lower parts of the earth, and will behold *all* that sleep, and enlighten *all* that hope in the Lord." (Eccl. XXIV, 45).

Thus that first Good Friday brought a great and blessed hour also to Purgatory. A foreboding of what was happening on Golgotha had already penetrated into this realm. The quaking of the earth at the death of Jesus had been felt there. Now all of a sudden the cry arises: "*Atollite portas, principes, vestras*" (Ps. 23, 7); "Up, ye spirits, open the gates, open the doors, open the eternal gates, that He may enter, the king of glory!" And He enters into the realm of woe and longing, and the Poor Souls see Him and, stirred to their heart by the nearness of God, they silently adore. A soul cries out: "Jesus!" and this cry lifts the ban of reverential fear and silence, and soul after soul repeats: "Jesus! Jesus!", until Purgatory resounds with the sacred Name which the Poor Souls never tire to repeat in adoration, love, and longing.

Now silence again reigns, and the Saviour speaks to them. He reveals Himself to them as their divine Redeemer and announces that the sacrifice was consummated in His Blood, that it would always be celebrated on earth in an unbloody manner, that they too would obtain a share in its fruits through the intercession of the living, that He would accept all that Christian charity on earth would do for them, as if they had done it themselves. Whether it was acceptable to the eternal laws of justice to grant an immediate amnesty, or whether the Saviour freed all or many souls, we do not know. But

this is certain: there was no soul in Purgatory which was not refreshed and comforted in a wonderful manner by the visit and the words of Jesus.

Christ's sermon to the Poor Souls is directed also to us. To us, too, the Saviour says: "I have given you an example, so that what I have done, you may do likewise" (John XIII, 15). Yes, also in this regard Jesus is our model. He goes before us; we should follow Him. As His soul descended into Purgatory, so we, in spirit, should visit and console the Poor Souls. The greatest favor He bestowed on them that day was that He blazed a trail to them by faith and love, for He knew that all His faithful disciples would follow in His steps, and would again and again descend to the Poor Souls to bring them help.

Thus the Church has acted from her earliest beginnings. She has let not one day pass without visiting the Poor Souls. As a solicitous mother she unceasingly and untiringly wanders to and fro among her living and her departed children, and does not forget the dead in her devotions. She remembers them at all her services on every festival she celebrates. Thus also have the saints acted. They followed the Lord so frequently into the nether world that they became quite at home there; they remained in closest intimacy with the Poor Souls, and made them partakers in all their prayers, indulgences, sufferings, labors, good works, and merits. Thus we, too, especially on a day like this, should again and again descend with Jesus into the realm of death and knock at the gates of Purgatory, which will be opened

without delay to faith and love. We, too, should delight in entering into that quiet, sad, yet beautiful world, to visit those noble souls that have to cancel their debt of penalties in burning, painful flames; those good souls who are so well disposed towards us; who will later on be so rich in eternal glory, but are now so extremely poor; who are to be praised as happy because they have run their course and have passed the judgment, yet are to be pitied because they are so helplessly given over to suffering, unless they receive aid from the living.

And how easy it is for us to help! The Saviour made us rich for them! They can still pray, in fact, their whole life and suffering are an uninterrupted prayer; but it lacks supernatural merit. The time of meriting is past for them, but we can apply to them the merits of our prayers. They can not attend Mass; we can offer the holy sacrifice for them, and by our memento cause the Blood of the New Law to flow down upon them. They can no longer receive holy Communion, and this is perhaps what they miss most keenly; we can apply our holy Communions to them. They can do no more good works because for them the night has come when no man can work (John IX, 4); we can, day after day, give them a share in our alms and works of charity. They, too, are to-day celebrating Good Friday, in bitter grief, in tender sympathy with the Saviour, but, that they may receive a portion of the graces, fruits, and merits of the sacrifice of the Cross, we must act for them.

Let us not refuse them our assistance! When we go to the holy sepulchre to-day and offer adoration and honor to the Dead Saviour, let us remember our beloved dead; let us descend into their abode with the soul of Jesus and bring them the graces of salvation. And not only to-day, but also on Easter Sunday, nay every day in the year. This spiritual journey need not take much time: all it requires is a lively faith and a fervent charity. We shall soon become fast friends of the Poor Souls, and this will be a good thing for ourselves. How much can we not learn from them, how much can they not teach us! And though they can not help themselves, they can help us, if we help them.

Yes, so help us God: we *will* come to their aid and pray to-day with all the ardor of our hearts: Jesus Christ, crucified, dead and buried, who hast descended into hell, have mercy on us and on the Poor Souls in Purgatory! *Amen.*

4. *AN EVENING SERMON ON THE POOR SOULS*

(Preached at the Second Homiletic Conference of the Diocese of Rottenburg, at Ravensburg, in 1913).

> "I must work the works of Him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh when no man can work."
> (John IX, 4)

"The law favors those that live" is a frequently heard saying. With us, in our Church, in our religious life, the dead, too, have their rights. They are not put aside with a few transient reminiscences, with a few touching sentimentalities, with a remembrance—alas, of too short duration. There is no sacrifice offered in the Catholic Church, no service held, no feast celebrated, without a prayer for the dead. For the good Catholic it is a religious necessity to entertain loving, tender, prayerful relations with the Poor Souls. The priest is bound not only to care for the souls of the living, but also for the peace of the departed. In holy Orders he has received the power to read the Epistles and Gospels and to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass, as for the living, so also for the dead. What the priest owes to the dead as their divinely appointed advocate with the living, we, hundreds of priests assembled from far and near, try in these days to understand clearly. It was our heart's desire to meet with you, our faithful people, to impart to you the spiritual gifts and graces of such a conference, and to strengthen you, or rather to be comforted with you by that which is common to us both, "your faith and mine" (Rom. I, 11 sq.), and to pay a visit with you to the Poor Souls in Purgatory.

Come, let us descend into those mysterious realms! As a light we will use the words of Him who says: "I am the light of the world" (John VIII, 12); the words, namely, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, whilst it is day; the night cometh when no man can work."

Our dead, our beloved dead! The very thought of them fills every heart with grief, and causes to bleed afresh a wound which has never fully closed. Our beloved dead! Where are they in the infinite realm of the beyond? We do not know for certain. But with the early Christians of Apostolic times, remembering human frailty and imperfection, and shuddering at God's infinite holiness and justice,—we reckon with the possibility that they may not yet be at home; that they may be saved, according to the Apostle's word, "so as by fire" (1 Cor. III, 15); that the last remnants of their sins must be effaced by the only sacrament existing in the other world, namely, the sacrament of fire.

And so we seek and find them in Purgatory, to which faith alone knows the way, and to which love holds the key. What a realm! Midway between Heaven and hell, itself a kind of Heaven in a kind of hell; the home of severest suffering, suffering willingly and joyfully borne, where, according to the poet, the souls "gratefully drink the sweet cup of torments," where with the Psalmist they confess lamenting, yet thankfully: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul" (Ps. XCIII, 19).

What mortal man is able to understand the joys and sorrows of which life in Purgatory consists! One of the bitterest sorrows is indicated by the words of Jesus that

night will come in which no man can work. Night has come for the Poor Souls in Purgatory.

The night is, as a proverb says, no man's friend. Still we rejoice at its coming after a laborious day. Does not the night bring rest also to the Poor Souls? Oh, yes; their work is done; for them the noise and bustle of the world are silenced; the poor heart with its impetuous throbbing stands still; gone are temptations, doubts, and worries; the judgment is over and salvation is secured. Therefore the Church says of them in the Memento of the Mass: "They are resting in Christ and sleeping the slumber of peace."

But it is not yet the blessed rest, not yet the perfect peace. Else the Church would not unceasingly pray: "Eternal rest grant them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them!" The rest of Purgatory is disturbed by much inquietude. With its darkness are mingled some of the horrors of death. It is the night in which "no man can work." The Poor Souls can no longer work; they can only suffer and endure, wait and hope.

It sometimes happens in our dreams that, in a position of extreme danger, we try hard to defend ourselves, to escape, or to cry out for help. But try as we may, we can not move a limb, we can not utter a sound, we are completely paralyzed.

A man returns from a foreign country. Joyfully he sets his foot on his native soil. Only a few hours more, he says, and I shall be with my family. But all of a sudden, on account of an epidemic, he is haled into

quarantine, which lasts many days, and forced to consume his energy in helpless waiting and longing.

Sometimes a man, with all his good will and love of work, can do nothing, because body or mind are wearied and refuse their services, or because circumstances over which he has no control deprive him of work. Such idleness against one's will is more exhausting and worrisome than the most arduous activity.

These are weak comparisons that can give us only a faint idea of "the night when no man can work," and how the Poor Souls must feel in Purgatory. They are poor indeed, poorer even than we. In such cases we have an easy way to change suffering into work, inability to work into merit: the good intention, by which we offer all our hardships and difficulties to God, gives them a true sacrificial value by touching them, as it were, to the Cross of Christ. For the Poor Souls the day of grace and merit is past; the night has come when no man can work, when even work is changed into pain, labor becomes torment. They are restlessly active, but fruitlessly. Restlessly: the night can bring no sweet slumber, for spirits do not sleep; restlessly: their yearning for home does not allow them to rest. "As the hart panteth for the fountain of water," so do they long for God, the Strong, the Living. They sigh: "When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. XLI, 2). But all their longing, and urging, and striving does not bring them nearer to their heavenly home. Their hope ever raises its wings, but it can never soar on high. Sorrow will not allow them to rest; self-accusation is steadily

gnawing: Woe to us, we have deserved our fate; why did we not make better use of our time on earth? Why did we not think more of the approaching night, when no man can work? Why did we not say with our Saviour: "I must work whilst it is day"? But all their sorrow effaces no guilt; only fire and pain can cleanse them, as precious metal can be refined only by fire. The purging flames give them no respite. Oh, how long is the night for the sufferer who lies awake and can not sleep!

And to all their inquiries: "Watchman, what of the night?" (Is. XXI, 11), and to all their plaints: "How long shall this sad exile last?"—a mournful echo answers: "A long, long time!" They ask "When shall this suffering cease?" and the answer is: "Suffer!" They longingly inquire: "Is not the radiant day of glory near?" and the answer comes: "Not yet." Onward moves the hand on the dial with ever the same tick: "Suffer and wait! wait and suffer!" And sadly, patiently they wait, and continue their restless labors,—these Poor Souls; but their work does not count. It is the night "when no man can work." "Unfruitful works of darkness," we might say with the Apostle (Eph. V, 11), or, as the Church calls it, "*poenae tenebrarum*" (the penalties of darkness; *Off. Def.*, Resp. lect. IX). It is penal labor, a wearing out of one's self without effect. It obtains nothing; it flows, yet dries up as a river in the sand. Are they not justly called "Poor Souls?"

This is the night when no man can work. How dismal it is, this night, and how full of terrors! Thank God, for us

the bright light of day is still shining, it is still time when man *can* work, when all the activities of body and mind, all the great and small labors, the professional work of the official as well as the manual work of the laborer, the sublime efforts of the genius and the rough toil of the peasant—when all that we do, is work,—real, weighty, meritorious work that brings not only earthly wages, but counts before God and for eternity, if we will only have it so. To us is still shining the day of grace, the day of salvation, when nothing is done in vain, nothing without a reward, since even what is unsuccessful here below brings fruit for eternal life, if we will only have it so. To us is still shining the sunny day which radiates gentle light even into the sorrowful night, transmutes suffering into work, glorifies a life that seems to be unmixed misery and woe, and imparts to it an unspeakable eternal value, if we will only have it so. But to will it,—that is our concern!

I have a message for you this evening. It comes from out of the night, where no man can work. The Poor Souls have given it to me,—those Holy Souls who think more of us than we do of them, and who are more solicitous for our salvation than they were for their own whilst on earth. "Bring them a greeting from us," they said; "preach to them and touch their conscience. Tell them to work whilst it is still day! Tell them that we beg and adjure them to make good use of their time and perform the work of Him who has given them a mission and a purpose; that they may weave golden threads of good works, prayers, and good intentions, of worship, of

Sundays kept holy, of Sacraments received, of charity, into the tissue of their lives. Tell them that often the day suddenly changes without warning into the night when no man can work; that, perhaps, many of those who are assembled for this evening's services, will not be here on All Souls' Day next year."

This is their message. I have delivered it to you. Now do what you see fit. He who does not wish to be a fool, will not leave this church tonight without repeating determinedly the words of Jesus: "I must do the work of Him that sent me whilst it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." I can still work; I may still work: therefore I will, I must work,—for myself and for my poor soul; and also for the Holy Souls that can no longer work. This is the second wish, the second petition of the Poor Souls,—their hope and earnest expectation. They can no longer work, but we can work for them, in their stead, according to the gracious law of vicarious satisfaction upon which all redemption is based. They are poor and weak; God has made us rich and strong for them. Theirs is a miserable life: no bell calls them to the house of God, no altar chimes announce to them the moment of the Consecration; they have no Sacrament of Penance, no holy Communion, no indulgences: only the painful remedy of fire! We can visit church for them, attend Mass for them, receive holy Communion for them, apply indulgences to them, give alms for them, and perform other good works for their benefit.

We can do all this without much labor, without loss to ourselves. Are we so hard and cruel as to refuse

the favor? A mother calls, a father laments: "Do not forget me, my child! Stretch forth thy helping hand, and I shall be saved!" And a degenerate son, a frivolous daughter answers: "Let me go; I will not do it." A brother, a sister, begs for alms, for a Pater noster, for a few drops of holy water, and they meet with a heartless "I will not, I do not care!" A friend, a benefactor, complains: "Why do you tarry so long? Long have I waited for you in vain!"—and you answer: "Be silent! I have no time for you!" A sympathetic man passes by a cemetery, or walks over the graves; his heart is filled with sadness and his eyes with tears; but he does not say as much as: "Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord!" To such applies the saying of St. Chrysostom: "You say: I mourn for my beloved dead? It would be better if you would help them, not with tears, but with prayers and offerings."[1]

There have been sentimental persons who thought it cruel that souls departed in the state of grace should still be punished for lesser faults, and purged and cleansed in Purgatory. This is not cruelty; it is a demand of God's infinite justice and holiness. You yourself are cruel if you refuse to do what God's mercy has made so easy for you, if you refuse to comfort, to refresh, to redeem the Poor Souls. You are guilty of cruelty towards noble souls, souls who are so near to you. You are cruel also towards yourselves; for what you refuse to them now, will be refused to you later on!

When St. John of God collected alms for his hospital in the streets of Granada, he called out: "Give alms,

[1] *Hom. in 1 Cor.*, 41 *n.* 4.

my brothers and sisters, for the love and mercy of yourselves." He did not say: "Pity the poor sick!" He said: "Be merciful to yourselves!" I, too, call out to you: "Be good to the Poor Souls, out of mercy towards them, and out of mercy towards yourselves!"

Keep up a continual intercourse with the Poor Souls in Purgatory. Let not a day pass without remembering them. "Make unto you friends, ... that, when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." (Luke XVI, 9). Do the work of Him that sent you whilst it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work. The night will come, it will surely come, and it will come soon. *Amen!*

SOME BOOKS ON THE POOR SOULS

ACKERMANN, *Helps for the Poor Souls in Purgatory.*

ALLEN, *Souls Departed.*

AUGUSTINE, ST., *How to Help the Dead.*

BERLIOUX, *Month of the Souls in Purgatory.*

BLOT, *In Heaven We Know Our Own.*

BOLO, *The Morrow of Life.*

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CATHERINE OF GENOA, ST., *Treatise on Purgatory.*

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EISENRING, *Voices from Purgatory.*

FABER, *November Leaves.*

FAURE, *The Consolations of Purgatory.*

GEMMINGER, *All Souls' Forget Me Not.*

GRAHAM, *Purgatory.*

HALLINAN, *Our Duties to Our Dead.*

HANNA, *"Purgatory," Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. XII, pp. 575-580.

HUSSLEIN, *The Souls in Purgatory.*

KENT, *A Little Book of Prayers for the Dead.*

KINANE, *Purgatory: Its Pains and Consolations.*

LAMBING, *Masses for the Dead.*

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MANNING, *On Purgatory.*

MCGRATH, *Prayers for the Dead.*

MUMFORD, *Two Ancient Treatises on Purgatory.*

Mourning for the Dead.

NICOLLS, *Anecdotes of Purgatory.*

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O'GORMAN, *A Novena for the Holy Souls in Purgatory.*

POHLE-PREUSS, *Eschatology*, pp. 75-101.

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SCHOUPPE, *Purgatory.*

THURSTON, *Memory of Our Dead.*

WISEMAN, *Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of of the Church*, Lect. XI.

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